

B A N D W A G O N



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

September-October 1976



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Vol. 20, No. 5 **September-October 1976**

Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor
Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

BANDWAGON, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society is published bi-monthly. Publication Advertising and Circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Road, Columbus, Ohio 43221. Advertising rates: Full page \$60.00, Half Page \$30.00, Quarter Page \$15.00. Minimum Ad \$10.00.

Subscription rates: \$9.00 a year to non-members in the United States and \$10.00 per year to non-members outside the United States. Single copy and back issues \$1.50 each, plus .30 postage.

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC., Stuart Thayer, President, 276 Sumac Lane, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48105; **Tom Parkinson, Vice President**, P.O. Box 233, Savoy, Ill. 61874; **Edward L. Jones, Secretary-Treasurer**, 800 Richey Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43701.

DIRECTORS, DIV. 1 — Fred D. Pfening, Jr., 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221 (Ohio-Mich.-Ind.); **DIV. 2 — William Donahue**, 81 Beechwood Ave., Torrington, Ct. 06790 (Maine-St.-N.H.-Mass.-Ct.-Del.); **DIV. 3 — Charles N. Sateja**, 2015 Prospect Ridge Blvd., Hadden Hts., N.J. 08035 (N.J.-Pa.-Va.-Md.-Wash. D.C.-W. Va.-Ky.); **DIV. 4 — Gene Plowden**, 720 S.W. 20th Rd., Miami, Fla. 33129 (N.C.-S.C.-Ga.-Ala.-Fla.-Miss.-Tenn.-Ark.-La.); **DIV. 5 — Robert Parkinson**, 101 Litchfield La., Baraboo, Wis. 53913 (Wis.-Ill.-Minn.-Iowa-Mo.); **DIV. 6 — James McRoberts**, 1116 W. 18th St., Topeka, Kan. 66604 (N.D.-S.D.-Neb.-Kan.-Okla.-Tex.); **DIV. 7 — Joseph S. Rettinger**, P.O. Box 20371, Phoenix, Ariz. 85936 (Mont.-Ida.-Wyo.-Col.-N.M.-Utah-Nev.); **DIV. 8 — Donald Marcks**, 525 Oak St., El Cerrito, Ca. 94530 (Wash.-Ore.-Ca.-Hawaii); **DIV. 9 — Edward W. Cripps**, 159 Morell St., Brantford, Ont., Canada (Can. and all countries outside U.S.A.)

THIS MONTH'S COVER

Our cover illustration is the front page of a color courier booklet used by the Pawnee Bill Historic Wild West in 1893. Major Gordon W. Lillie (Pawnee Bill) and his wife May Lillie are featured in a beautiful lithographed color plate on the original.

Lillie began his circus life with the Cody & Carver Wild West in 1883, and started his own show in 1888. The Pawnee Bill show toured through the 1908 season. In 1909 it was merged with the Buffalo Bill show, and the "Two-Bills" show continued until the middle of the 1913 season, when it folded.

NEW MEMBERS

William S. Gillam #3059
 961 Keefer Rd.
 Girard, Ohio 44420

Dr. Conrad DiMichele #3060
 Box 38
 Scooba, Mississippi 39358

Brian L. Morrissey #1275
 (Reinstated)
 55118 Beau Bien Blvd.
 Naperville, Illinois 60540

Herbert Head, Jr. #120
 (Reinstated)
 17883 Blehl
 Roseville, Mich. 48066

Charles Moyer #3061
 P.O. Box 10186
 Sarasota, Florida 33578

Manuel W. Phelps #3062
 1604 Webster
 Topeka, Kansas 66604

Arto Monaco #3063
 Route 9N
 Upper Jay, New York 12987

Thomas De Nora #3064
 291 Willow Way
 Clark, New Jersey 07066

Donna Hauch #3065
 1236 W. John Beers Rd.
 Stevensville, Mich. 49127

Larry M. Kent #3066
 1300 NE. 110 St.
 Miami, Florida 33161

Billy E. Griffin #3067
 905 East Walnut St.
 Fort Branch, Ind. 47648

Robert C. Boelio #3068
 2433 Clawson Ave.
 Royal Oak, Mich. 48073

Marjorie M. Carpenter #3069
 1710 White St.
 Port Huron, Michigan 48060

Joseph A. Giordano #3070
 16 Clark Dr.
 E. Northport, New York 11731

John T. O'Toole #3071
 1300 Shrine Rd., Box 143
 Springfield, Ohio 45504

Philip Makanna #3072
 665 Arkansas St.
 San Francisco, California 94107

James R. Lupfer, III #3073
 268 N. Lansdowne Ave.
 Lansdowne, Pa. 19050

Michael Dinkel #3074
 521 Gardendale Rd.
 Terre Haute, Indiana 47803

Harold B. Cornwell #3075
 4360 Torquay Ave.
 Toledo, Ohio 43615

**"ANNALS OF
 THE AMERICAN CIRCUS
 1793-1829"**
 by Stuart Thayer

For the last four years the author has been visiting libraries (fifty-six of them) and reading newspapers (80,000 of them) in an attempt to chronicle the earliest days of the circus in America. This book is offered as a result of that effort and is the most complete record compiled to date. Every act, every performer, every stand and every newspaper review he found is here. Most of the companies listed have never had their names published before; most of the performers in this book are unknown to circus historians. The index contains over four hundred-fifty performers' names. You will find here the first combination of circus and menagerie; the first bareback rider in America; the first use of the canvas tent and many other innovative events in the history of the circus.

Paperbound, 5"x8", 8 illustrations,
 240 pages.
 \$20.00 per copy (pp) from the
 author:
 276 Sumac Lane
 Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105

Edition limited to 200 copies.

Eddie Grapeengieser #1116
(Reinstated)
1670 N. Stevens St.
Rhineland, Wis. 54501

Ronald M. Bacon #3076
P.O. Box 485
Belpre, Ohio 45714

Howard E. Roscoe #3077
1082 Raleigh
Geen Bay, Wisconsin 54304

Linda L. Carpenter #3078
1819 Lardie Rd.
Traverse City, Mich. 49684

Paul K. Pattison #3079
Route 2
Laurel, Ontario LON-ILO

Peter Cobb #3080
259 Naubuc Ave.
East Hartford, Conn. 06118

Bob Langin #3081
929 Hand Ave.
Sarasota, Florida 33580

Barclay G. McKeough #3082
3928 Camellia Dr.
Myrtle Beach, Florida 29577

John E. Lanham #3083
1204 S. Washington St.
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

CHRISTMAS ADS NEEDED

The November-December issue of the **BANDWAGON** is traditionally the giant issue of the year.

The money to publish an expanded issue comes from the advertising income. A number of circuses advertise, as well as the various circus museums.

Your personal Christmas greetings advertisement is a fine way to help pay for the increased number of pages. The advertising rates are \$60 for a full page; \$30 a half page; \$15 for a quarter page. A small minimum ad is \$10. Ads should be received by the Editor by December 1.

Advertising in this issue is another way you can help your Circus Historical Society.

ADDRESS CHANGE REMINDER

When you move and do not advise the **BANDWAGON** of your new address in advance your magazine is discarded by the post office and a postage due notice is returned to us with a collect charge of 25¢.

As we have advised in the past, your copy of the **BANDWAGON** cannot be replaced free.

So please, please advise us in advance, so you will not lose your copy and we will not have to hand over 25¢ to the postal service.

HORSE DRAWN PARADE WAGONS FOR SALE

Wood burning steam calliope wagon, requires no special skill or talent to operate. Excellent condition. Decorated with fancy carvings, (fiberglass cast) and mirrors.

Medicine wagon, milk delivery type wagon used as medicine man's wagon in traveling show. Very fancy paint work and lettering, excellent condition.

Details and photos on request
Call Toby at 201-566-0157 evenings

CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM

Proudly Presents

"THE 1977 CIRCUS CALENDAR"

Featuring six, full color reproduction of lithographs donated to the Museum by the Joseph Schlitz Brewing Co.

Included Barnett Bros.; 4 Barnum & Bailey and a 101 Ranch Wild West Show lithograph.

17" x 24" Mailed Rolled in a pull string tube.

\$2.50 each

CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM BARABOO, WISCONSIN 53913

ANOTHER LITHO COLLECTION

Darien House, publisher of "100 Years of Circus Posters" has done it again by publishing

"100 POSTERS OF BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST"

It's 120 pages, 11x16 Inches, depict 100 posters of which 72 are in full color.

Even its film-laminated color soft cover is especially attractive and it too is edited by Jack Rennert.

Be the first to get one. It's \$9.00 postpaid.

Still available:

100 Years of Circus Posters \$8.50ppd

50 Years of Movie Posters \$10.00ppd

Send 25¢ for list of 1/4" scale model circus wagons, baggage horses, new and used circus books, programs, phonograph records and other items too numerous to mention.

BETTY SCHMID

485 SLEEPY HOLLOW ROAD

PITTSBURGH, PA 15228

THE CIRCUS IN NEW ORLEANS 1861-1865

By John F. Polacsek

At the end of the 1860 season most circuses were in their winter quarters above the Mason-Dixon line. The reason for this was obvious - most shows even those which avowed great Southern ties like John Robinson and G. N. Eldred were owned and operated by Northerners. With the opening of hostilities between the North and South, a situation was created whereby circuses could perform only in those areas under the control of Union forces.

For the purposes of this article, the city of New Orleans between the years 1861 - 1865 and the shows which performed there will be examined. Needless to say quite a variety of amusements existed in a town the size of New Orleans, but only a few circuses performed there, either prior to the war or after the city had been taken by Union forces. The need to escape into a world of frivolity did exist, and all classes of people, whether they be poor man, banker, Northerner, or Southerner were treated to the circus's particular form of amusement.

The year 1861 opened with animosities existing between the North and South. While most shows were in winter quarters at least one show - the Dan Rice Circus continued to perform throughout the winter in New Orleans. This city on the Mississippi River had always been noted for its acceptance of the circus ever since the first show arrived there in 1815. Since then a myriad of shows passed through the town, and two circus amphitheatres had been built in town. The Academy of Music was operated by the Spalding & Rogers Circus while the famous clown Dan Rice performed with his circus in the Pelican Theatre. The Spalding Circus decided to spend the winter of 1860-1861 in the North, thus Dan Rice had a free rein in New Orleans. Spalding & Rogers appeared to be abandoning their Southern showgrounds as they leased their amphitheatre to a variety of groups, none circuses, and sold their showboat the *James Raymond* to Dan Rice. Although the *James Raymond* had the facilities on board to host a variety of performances it was not used, and Rice performed before packed houses in the Pelican Theatre.

Political ideologies sometimes affect other elements in society, and after the Ordinance of Secession was passed by Louisiana on January 26, 1861, sectionalism became apparent in the circus ring. During one performance of Rice's Circus, there was an act of horsemanship in which a performer waved the Stars and Stripes while the orchestra played the Star Spangled Banner. In essence this was comparable to waving a red flag in front of a bull, as after the appearance of the flag and a few bars of music public disapproval was evident in the audience. What one individual originally started soon swelled into a major uproar. Dan Rice was not present and as the storm increased he came forward, waved the orchestra silent and faced the crowd. Just what went through his mind no one can really tell. Rice possibly thought that a riot might destroy his amphitheatre, or maybe he was patriotic and was

This cut was used by Dan Rice in New Orleans in 1861. He was dressed in the regalia of the stars and stripes. Pfening Collection.



defending his flag, all thirty-three stars and thirteen stripes. The tension grew and Rice decided to act.

Turning to the man who started the uproar Dan Rice went into an eloquent rendition of the time he was standing on a dock in Liverpool, England. He saw a gallant vessel with the stars and stripes floating from her mast as she came into the harbor, and stated that he felt safe on a foreign shore. He proclaimed that he would defend his flag whether it be across the oceans or on the stage in New Orleans. Apparently the audience admired Dan's actions for there arose a cheer and the questionable performance continued. As the Star Spangled Banner filled the air, the equestrian carried the flag around the ring and ended the performance.

Not wishing a repeat of this tense moment, the circus only stayed in town a short while longer as it began the long water route up the mighty Mississippi. The bow of the *James Raymond* was headed upstream stopping at various ports along the way. At Natchez, Mississippi, the show erected the tent for performances on March 14 & 15. The local newspaper commented that an "old and particular friend, Dan Rice came to town with colors flying and his music sounding from the *James Raymond*." The illustrious band of equestrians, acrobats, and other performers received praise from the local press, and it was further expected that the show would return to Natchez the next autumn after a successful Northern tour.

The *James Raymond* churned the muddy waters of the Mississippi as the show moved from port to port. From April 2nd to the 6th the boat was tied to the dock at Memphis, Tennessee. The showboat came into town playing her calliope while the band played favorite tunes of the day as the tent was erected on a vacant lot near the river. The usual performances were displayed, but one major question remained to be answered concerning the performer M'le Ella Zoyara. The equestrian performance which was presented had the whole audience anxious to know whether to call the performer a man or a woman for the feats of horsemanship "astonish the world, permitting people

in either case to doubt whether she, he or it is of heaven or earth."

One minor problem did arise however before the show left town. On the last day a restraining order was issued claiming that the show was a nuisance and the managers were enjoined from performing. Just why the show was not to perform is unclear, but notwithstanding the order the performance went on as scheduled. Possibly a Southern sympathizer wanted the Stars and Stripes taken down from the main pole of the tent, or he was not pleased with the rendition of Yankee Doodle and preferred the strains of Dixie. The trouble was minor for the show struck their tent and passed from the Mississippi to the Ohio River and down the Cumberland River to Nashville, Tennessee.

When the show arrived in Nashville on April 15 the mood of the town was definitely changed. Fort Sumter had been fired upon two days earlier and the Civil War was no longer a war of words. The prospect of an armed conflict on the showgrounds was practically nil, even though Rice was a Yankee. Rice's show had not played in Nashville for some eight years and his return was greeted by the local newspaper editor. The irrepressible monarch of the ring was in town, and this was a time when people could get away from everyday life and be entertained in a pleasant and cheering atmosphere. A large number of the town's most honored and influential citizens attended with their families and all appeared satisfied with the horsemanship, the antics of the clowns, and acrobatics. The local editor commented that he "always believed and shall ever maintain, that public exhibitions should prove conducive to the morals of a community." The show ended its four day stand on a good note, a filled treasurers box, then proceeded up the Cumberland River to the Ohio.

The trip North through Tennessee and Kentucky was one filled with rumors and excitement. One rumor concerned a request by the newly formed Confederate navy to buy the *James Raymond* from Rice. Supposedly after a direct approach failed, a blockade was set on the Cumberland River to catch the boat before it reached safe territory. The major problem with the story is that Tennessee did not secede from the Union until June, 1861, and Kentucky was a neutral state. Even if a few secessionists had attempted this blockade, just why would they want the *James Raymond*? It was not a military vessel, and once all the seats were removed all it could be used for would be cargo. There were plenty of boats on the river in better shape than the *James Raymond* so why pick on one little boat when a flotilla could be amassed in any Southern port?

This herald was used by the Dan Rice Great River Show during the 1864 season. Admission charge was 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children under 10 years. Pfening Collection.

One other difficulty arises concerning a supposed seizure of the *James Raymond* as an 1862 program portrayed the boat running a blockade in the summer of 1861 at Memphis, Tennessee. It appears strange that this blockade was on a different river prior to any hostilities breaking out. Then again why would Dan Rice take his show back into Tennessee waters after such an action, as he did go to Nashville a week later. Rival showmen claimed that Dan Rice was a Southern sympathizer and possibly this fictitious propaganda was a way to show that he was just as patriotic as anyone else.

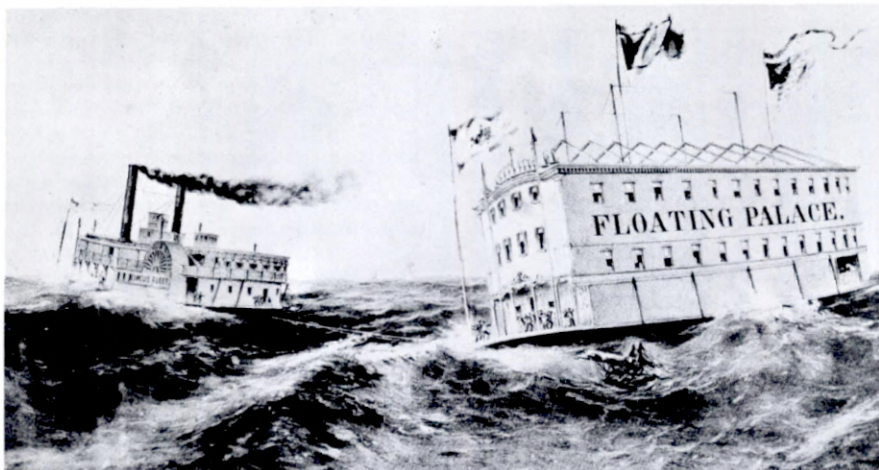
The Dan Rice Circus was the last show to perform in New Orleans until after it was captured by Union forces in April, 1862. There were two ways to approach New Orleans. The first was to go by sea from the North, a move that no circuses used, while the second would use the Mississippi River as a source of travel. The year 1862 was not overabundant in military gains for the North, thus circuses had to wait until 1863 to follow the victorious Union armies into the Confederacy.

With a victory over the Confederates at Vicksburg, Mississippi, on July 4, 1863, practically all the Mississippi River was open, or soon would be. Because this main artery of communication was to be available, plans were being arranged by the George F. Bailey & Sands & Nathans & Company Circus to gamble on taking their show down the river to New Orleans. The bold plan was to somehow get to a prime area where soldiers and civilians alike could take some time to to enjoy the feats performed in the ring under the big top.

The Bailey Circus was scheduled to perform from November 2 - 21 in St. Louis, after having a successful tour in the North which was overrun with shows crisscrossing each other, and with competition being very keen. On November 17 a St. Louis paper, included with a review of the show, a notice that the circus troupe would be shipped to New Orleans to exhibit at the Academy of Music. On November 23, the circus loaded everything that it would need on a river boat and as the boat swung out into the current it was destined for New Orleans.

The Mississippi did not always permit safe travel, since Federal gunboats continually patrolled its muddy waters. Warships would occasionally stop the circus boat and warn the captain that some stretches of the river were being harassed by Confederate artillery. These flying batteries played a deadly game of hide-and-seek with the Union gunboats as they fired on a few vessels, then moved to other locations thereby disrupting shipping.

The circus did not have much time to stop at various ports or army camps along the river, and danger still lurked around the next bend in the river. One day a gunboat stopped the boat and instructed the captain that when he met the next gunboat he was to blow his whistle and wait to be escorted past a dangerous location. The captain proceeded downstream and following orders stopped, and was escorted by a pair of Union gunboats along a portion of the river where enemy activity had been noted. As the boats steamed down the river a Confederate battery opened up, and placed forty shells into the hull of the circus boat. The 'protecting' gunboats were on the wrong side to ward off the Confederate shells with their iron plating, and the showmen's



boat took the brunt of the artillery fire. The gunboats then dropped behind, and silenced the enemy battery with a few well placed barrages. Fortunately, all hands on the circus boat emerged unscathed, and in good enough spirits to open in New Orleans on December 3, 1863.

The *New Orleans Picayune* was exuberant over the arrival of the circus as the city had not been graced by the presence of a circus for almost three years. The show performed in the Academy of Music, an amphitheatre that was designed primarily for circuses. New Orleans was not devoid of amusements as plays, operas, and other amusements could be found, but the *Picayune* proclaimed that the Academy "is in its glory". The circus or "Horse Opera" as it was occasionally called was "a firmly settled institution at the Academy and tumblers, riders, jokers, and indeed, all the performers gave general satisfaction, drawing full houses every night." The talented artists included George Ross, the celebrated Trick Rider; Mlle Josephine, the graceful and beautiful equestrienne; Charles Rivers, a four horse rider; Shappe & Whiting, the best trapeze performers in the world, and a host of others.

Reviews of the show mainly mentioned performers, and little description of the acts. There is one review however which was written by a Union soldier who attended the circus on January 8, 1864.

At night I went to the first show I have attended in New Orleans. It was at the Academy of Music and was fine. There was a troop of trained dogs that did everything but talk, and I expected that would be the next thing. Some were dressed like ladies and were posted around the ring on little chairs. A coach, drawn and driven by dogs, and with other dogs inside, came around making calls on the ladies. The coach would pull up opposite a lady, the footman would jump down and hold the horses while the

Dan Rice had appeared with Spaulding & Rogers, and later purchased the JAMES RAYMOND river boat that had towed the Spaulding FLOATING PALACE, from Spaulding. The JAMES RAYMOND is shown here in a print of the FLOATING PALACE.

lady inside got out and rubbed noses with the lady in the chair, and then on to the next until the circuit was completed. People could not have acted the part better. All that was lacking was the chatter and the smack that would have been heard if humans had acted the part. The rest was good but the dogs suited me best.

Diversity of a performance allows everyone to find something that they like best, and apparently this soldier preferred the animals to the human performers.

On January 9, 1864, a new attraction appeared at the Academy as the trapeze performers Shappe & Whiting were overshadowed by the appearance of Professor Nicholo and his son Robert, two noted trapeze artists. The trapeze act had been introduced to the world in November 1859 by the French acrobat Leotard, and the Professor and his son were just two in a long list which followed Leotard as they flew through the air. The city of New Orleans was to be treated to the ZAMPILLEARESTATION, or the Flying Trapeze as it was called.

Professor Nicholo and his son had just arrived from New York via Havana on the steamer *Morning Star*, and exciting and novel acts such as theirs were always welcomed. The local press was receptive to the duo who dared to fly through the air and perform high above the heads of the crowds. The two performers were engaged for about a month as they were scheduled to leave for prior commitments. The auditorium was packed for their final performance February 5. The show presented the attractive acrobatic and gymnastic displays, the trained horses, animals, the humorous

sayings and doings of the clowns, and a performance by Madame Carolista who walked a wire from the floor to the highest point in the building. A special ceremony was also scheduled to honor Professor Nicholo and his son Robert. The Union officers who made up a good part of the audience presented a gold medal to the duo bearing the following inscription:

On the Obverse - Testimonial to Robert Nicholo, presented by the officers of the Army and Navy, in the Department of Gulf, U.S.A. Souvenir of their esteem for his graceful and daring performance of the Zampilaerostation act.

On the reverse - In the centre, the American Eagle encircled by the

The George F. Bailey & Co's. combined with Sands, Nathans & Co's. Circus used this herald in 1863. The show featured a hippopotamus owned by G. C. Quick. Plening Collection.

GRAND METROPOLITAN CIRCUS!
 GEO. F. BAILEY & CO'S
CIRCUS!
 HERB DRISCHBACH'S Large and Comprehensive
MENAGERIE!
 G. C. QUICK'S COLossal
HIPPOTAMUS
 SANDS, NATHANS & CO'S
PERFORMING ELEPHANTS.
LARGEST ARRAY OF PERFORMERS
 Mlle JOSEPHINE, SHAPPEE & WHITNEY
 JAMES DeMOTTA, SIGNOR FENANTI,
 SAM BURT, J. WARD,
 CHAS. RIVERS, JOHNNY BOOKER,
 GEORGE SLOMAN,
Tumblers, Vaulters, Dancers, &c.
LIST OF ANIMALS.
 Together with HERB DRISCHBACH'S Box of
PERFORMING ANIMALS!

legend - Academy of Music, New Orleans, U.S., Feb. 6, 1864.

Both civilians and military personnel attended the circus, but the military had a distinct way of showing its appreciation for a good performance. The show continued to play for full houses until February 16th, when it started the long trip back North.

A circus did not return to New Orleans until late in the year 1864 when the Seth B. Howes European Circus opened on December 12th. The show erected the big top on Congo Square, and the schedule called for two performances daily, while on Tuesday and Saturday there was to be a parade through the streets of the city. The monster tent of this great equestrian and zoological institution was raised, and the show arranged in a manner which was similar to those which preceded it to New Orleans. Actually the show followed an old traditional circus route which started in the North in the spring, traversed the country during the summer and fall, then performed in the South during the winter. The route was completed by following the migrating birds North the next spring.

Although the Howes Circus was traditional in one way it was distinct in another - in the parade. The show had recently returned from Europe, and had brought back a variety of new parade wagons. Among the wagons was a new tableau car drawn by six black horses which contained an allegorical tableau of America. One female performer was classically draped as the Goddess of Liberty, with a living lion at her feet, and around her were a group of women representing Europe, Asia, Africa, America, with Truth and Justice standing by. It must have been impressive as the tableau wagons were new to the American circus. A review of the parade appears as follows:

We joined the crowd of boy-dom, girl-dom, and citizen of-African-descent-dom, and richly were our eyes repaid by the gorgeous pageantry of S. B. Howe's great European Circus. First went the car of the musicians, drawn by six splendid horses - we believe we have heard such horses called calico-horses - and as they went they dispersed all over the city such sweet strains of music as Orpheus of old might have made. Then came other cars, each with six horses, magnificently caparisoned, and at each end of the four corners of the cars was a lady in stage costume, representing the four quarters of the world.

In one car was a globe of great size, on the top of which was a chair on which sat a lady, elevated far above all the rest, like a queen of the whole realm of circusdom. Between the cars rode men arrayed

in the mail-clad armor of the middle ages, and by the side of each cavalier rode an equestrian dame.

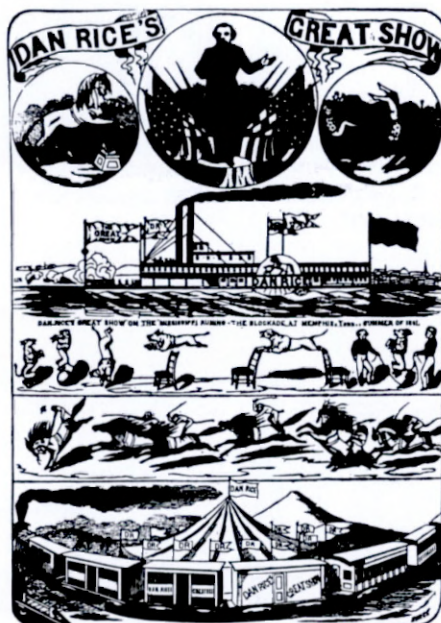
About the centre of the procession, on the top of an immense car, was a lion, which, with a most majestic and serene aspect, gazed around . . . It was, indeed, a novel sight to see the king of beasts in such perfect subservency to the will of his master, as thus to take an "outside seat" and excite no fear in the minds of the immense crowd. His shaggy mane was slightly stirred by the passing breeze, but his immensely whickered keeper appeared complete "master of the situation."

The new parade wagons were a sight to behold, and as time was to prove they were the coming wave in the future.

Circuses like new and exciting attractions, although some stand-bys were also being acquired. In January Mr. Seth B. Howes went to an auction being held on Lafayette Square, and returned to his menagerie with a camel. Originally the animal had been taken as a prize of war at Brownsville, Texas in August of 1864, but the Union Quartermaster's Department could see little use for it. The possibility of sending the camel to the Union Camel Corps in California was so remote it was put up for public auction. The bidding was spirited for the final price was \$1,000, a quite expensive addition to the zoological department of the circus.

Additions are usually welcomed, except when they arrive in the form of competition. In January, 1865, the Spalding & Rogers Ocean Circus came to New Orleans and opened in their

This cut was used by the Dan Rice show during the 1862 season. John C. Kunzog Collection.



amphitheatre the Academy of Music. In an effort to keep attendance up the Howe show cut their price of admission to twenty five cents, but their time was growing short. On January 22 the big top was struck, and the show headed North to Baton Rouge and Natchez. This left the Spalding & Rogers Circus alone in the city, and they made the best of the situation by presenting a great consolidation of performers. The Great Ocean Circus presented equestrians, acrobats, gymnasts, comic jesters, and trained animals. Among the ranks was Professor Sears, whose collection of trained animals included a baby elephant and a pair of boxing kangaroos. Unfortunately few reviews exist even though the circus performed for a month in town before moving North.

By early 1865 the war was winding down to the point that it was almost over, and circuses could come and go as they pleased. New Orleans had been an important port and jumping off station for soldiers and sailors fighting on the Mississippi and along the Gulf of Mexico. It was here that transient Union soldiers and civilians were enticed to part with the price of admission to watch a circus. The movement of circuses around the country, and to New Orleans during the Civil War was another case of the circus going to the audience rather than waiting for the audience to come to it.

Sources:

018New York Clipper - 1861-1865
New Orleans Picayune - 1861-1865
Nashville Republican Banner - 1861
Natchez Daily Courier - 1861
Van Alstyne, Lawrence, *Diary of An Enlisted Man*, New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1910.
Kunzog, John C., *The One Horse Show*, Jamestown: John C. Kunzog, 1962.

BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966 all issues but March-April
1967 all issues available
1968 all issues available
1969 Jan.-Feb., July-Aug.,
Nov.-Dec.
1970 all issues available
1971 all issues but May-June
1972 all issues available
1973 all issues available
1974 all issues available
1975 all issues available
1976 all issues to date

The price is \$1.50 each.
Please add 50¢ postage.

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
2515 Dorset Rd.
Columbus, Ohio 43221



The final day of the Col. Tim McCoy Wild West, May 14, 1938, in Washington, D.C.

MORE KELTY PHOTOS

Edward J. Kelty, operated the Century Flashlight Photographers, Inc., at 74 West 475h Street, New York, N.Y. Kelty was one of the finest large group photographers in the United States. He took photos of all of the large conventions that were held in New York during the winter. In the summer he went on the road visiting circuses where he would gather all of the circus personnel in a group

for a photo. On the larger rail shows hundreds of people would be lined up for the massive shot.

In addition to his 12 x 22 1/2" plate camera he also used an 11 x 14" camera. A number of fine performer photos were made with the smaller camera. The photo here of Fred Bradna, in 1930, was taken with the smaller camera.

Kelty also took a number of big top and Madison Square Garden photos of the Ringling Barnum show as well as other large railers. He started in the middle 1920's and was active until the 1953 1930s.

The two smaller photos of Kelty are from the C.P. Fox collection. The other views are from the Pfening Collection.

Edward J. Kelty is pictured here (center) with some friends on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1934.



Sparks Circus on the Port Chester, N.Y. lot in 1930.



Kelty is pictured here as he is about to take the Downie Bros. group in 1934.





Inside the Big Top of Ringling-Barnum
in Brooklyn, N.Y. in 1931.



Hunt Bros Circus spec in Terrytown,
N.Y. in 1933.



Fred Bradna, equestrian director of
Ringling-Barnum back stage at Madison
Square Garden in 1930.

The Al G. Barnes Circus spec in the
backyard in Woodward, Okla. in 1937.



Floyd King

— 1888-1976



Clearly, Floyd King loved the circus. Even more than most of its people do. He loved its traditions and its novelties.

So it pleased him immensely when he could revive an old title as he did with Sells & Gray, or reintroduce Arabian tumbling as he did with Slayman Ali's troupes. Or when he brought back the parade and when he made balloon ascensions a big thing again. It was the same urge that caused him to try harder than most to keep a steam calliope around. He admired Jerry Mugivan and Jess Adkins: I always figured this was because they ran circus shows and he revered shows and men like that.

Floyd could be counted on for his own trademarks. The Coca Cola, the Pink letterhead paper, the yellow trucks, and his calling everyone "Son."

I don't suppose he ever substituted in the ring or beat the drum. But he did everything else. He stands out as the last and about the greatest general agent. He never claimed to be at his best as an owner. Late in life he adapted his ways to learn phone promotion and virtually overnight became the expert.

For all these things and more, his peers called him Phineas. Here was circus people's knack for the put-down as a thinly disguised form of admiration. They want to appear calloused and it comes out warm. It came on as a put-down and it came out as a salute; they called him Phineas because they considered him the modern Barnum.

Like P.T., Floyd had troubles, but he could cope with them. His shows survived longest without money. He had been broke and ill and badgered. At rocking-chair age he opted to troupe by bus with heavy

baggage, contracting more towns for his beloved circuses.

He knew all the formulas and created some of them: the percentage of nut that ought to go to the advance, the idea that the initial buyer of new show equipment could not win but the third owner probably could come out okay, and of course how to route and advertise a circus. His gems of the billwriter's art turn up in heralds, couriers and lithographs across 60 seasons. And we recall his solution for starting a show without a bankroll: print some pads of passes and announce the cookhouse is open. In the best sense of the words, he had all the answers.

Of course, he had operated big shows and little shows, rail shows and truck shows, two-car outfits and street shows and hall shows and indoor shows. I guess he missed the wagon shows.

I made a few towns with him when he owned the King show, going to the telegraph office, the post office and the newspaper among other places. He thrived in the role of the homey celebrity, moving into the newspaper office and introducing himself, flashing the b.r. to pay his advertising bill, and going from desk to desk to shake hands. The editor and reporters figured he was the famous circus man returned to their town again, and it was all smiles and reunion time. Floyd wrapped them up, told a story about the old elephant, and complimented them about their paper and their town. I wondered in at least one case how he ever could have been there before and how he convinced those reporters he had met them earlier.

And then we went out to the curb to see

his parade. Floyd really enjoyed seeing it again — on Wednesday just as he had on Tuesday. He loved that march and watched it with the same sort of pleasure as the town kids around him. He shared a sly smile with me because we both knew he had a special way to make sure the calliope belched the blackest possible smoke.

Everyone has his favorite story about Floyd King. I like one told by an agent whom he had ordered to backtrack several hundred miles across Texas to meet quickly with a committee. The man objected to the work. But Floyd said, "Now Son, there's nothing to it. You just sit there in the nice car and take it easy and let the engine do all that work!"

A touch I admire was the line in his ads asking for a flageolet player. It had been years since grift shows had a cooch for the blow-off in the side show, all to the tune of a flageolet. Few people knew what one was. I doubt if there was a real flageolet player to be had anywhere in the readership of *The Billboard*. He knew that better than anyone. But I think Floyd King figured this was a fun thing to do, something keyed to the older times, something professional, something that was true Circus. It was like bringing back the Arabs and the balloon and the parade. It was like having a calliope.

So several times the King advertisements told their story: "Phone man wanted. Can use family act doing two or more. Napoleon Reed come on. Need few more good billers." and:

"Flageolet player wanted."

That was Floyd King at his best. I hope his heaven has more flageolet players than harpists. — Tom Parkinson

The 1938 Season

The Jan. 1, 1938 Billboard said that Charlie Sparks had returned to Macon from Hot Springs a few days after Christmas and was reported to now be in splendid health following his serious illness in the late fall. He said he had not made any definite plans for the coming season. However, shortly after this report, Sparks decided to continue with his motorized Downie Bros. Circus and no further mention was made of his proposed railroad show.

Sparks correctly interpreted the economic slowdown which had set in during the fall of 1937 and decided he should retrench somewhat for the coming season. A major decision was to let Carlos Carreon and his regular people handle the aftershow and not go after another well known western movie personality as had been the custom since 1932. Sparks also cut down on the total number of performers as well as other personnel, however the performance would still be of top quality. Physically the show was also cut down. New canvas was ordered and included a smaller big top, a 110 ft. round with three 40's rather than a 120 which had been used since 1934. The menagerie was a 60 ft. round but with only three 30 ft. middles as opposed to four which had been used for several years. In all probability the number of cages was reduced to around five. With the cutbacks the show was able to eliminate a number of trucks.

Unfortunately other showmen didn't have the foresight of Sparks and instead of retrenching they went ahead with plans for additional shows or expansions. Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell framed a new 15 car Robbins

Photo No. 1 — One sheet flat featuring leaping tiger was posted for Downie Bros. stand at Greenville, S. C., Sept. 26, 1938. Color scheme had blue title lined in red on white background. Numeral "3" was in red, the tiger in natural colors with green grass at left. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.



Part VI, The 1938 and 1939 Seasons by Joseph T. Bradbury

Bros. Circus to join their already successful Cole Bros. show and Tim McCoy spent 200 G's of his own and backers money in launching a brand new 30 car wild west show. These new railers would give the country a total of six in 1938, largest number on the road since 1931.

In February both Downie Bros. and Russell Bros. signed an agreement with the International Alliance of billposters and billers for the new season. This left Barnett Bros. as the only major show still not signed by the union.

The Feb. 26, 1938 Billboard said that George Page, formerly with the Ringling-Barnum elephant department, would be in charge of the Downie herd of camels and was currently in Macon breaking a novelty camel act which he would work in the performance as well as riding the "racing camels". No further mention is made of this and the act was not listed in the program for the season. Evidently the plans for the camel act did not materialize.

Several personnel changes were made around the middle of February.

Photo No. 12 — This one sheet flat used by Downie Bros. in 1939 was from U. S. Printing Co., Kansas City, Mo. It was a stock sheet which had been used by Barney Bros. in 1937. Color scheme has title in white on dark blue background. Orange is used for the large circle and to outline the word "circus". The tree, grass foliage, and background at bottom of the sheet is in green. The elephant is in natural colors. Collection of Ronald C. Gore.

Rodney Harris, Downie bandleader for several seasons, resigned to take charge of the band on the new Robbins Bros. Circus and was replaced by R. T. Carsey. Max Kassaw, who had been with Frank Wirth's Circus, was named manager of the sideshow, replacing William DeBarrie, and Clement (Buck) Taylor was placed in charge of the Downie herd of elephants which numbered 8 and included Tena, Babe, Queen, Pinto, Addie, Cora, Inez, and Marion.

The March 3, 1938 Billboard had the

Photo No. 2 — Downie Bros. advance car No. 1 at Macon, Ga. winterquarters, April 2, 1938. Photo by Eddie Jackson.





following advertisement, "Wanted, Experienced Steward, circus painter, two clowns with good walk arounds, good wrestler for concert. Address Chas. Sparks, Downie Bros. Circus, Macon, Ga. All sideshow people address Max Kassow, manager, New York City."

Activity in Macon which had started later than usual picked up in early March and The Billboard reported that the show would open in Macon in April as usual and that the repair shops were going full blast with Sparks actively in charge of all activities. Other notes said that the Joe Hodgini riding act of five people had been signed as a feature act and would transport its own stock, properties, etc. Downie again furnished animals and equipment for the Hamid-Morton Shrine Circus date in Miami with Charles Katz in charge.

In mid-March it was announced that Jerome T. Harriman would serve as general agent, this being his sixth season with Sparks. James M. Beach was signed as contracting agent, Lee Corranoe, as manager of the advance cars and James M. Salter, 24 hour agent.

Shortly before the season opened Sparks leased the operation of the candy stands and other privileges to the Southern Circus Concession Co., a corporation recently formed in Macon by Sam Crowell, Adolph Crowell, Harry Nelson, and Paul M. Conway. It was the first time the show did not operate these stands directly. William W. Burger, who was employed by the new concession operators in 1938, recently wrote this interesting account.

"In the spring of 1938 I was laid off from the General Electric Co. in my hometown, Lynn, Mass. I had just turned 21 and felt this was a chance of a lifetime to go on the road. I knew the Downie Bros. Circus, having seen it several times and that was the show for me. I went into the old Boston

Photo No. 3 — Group of Downie Bros. vehicles at Macon, Ga. winterquarters, April 2, 1938. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

Sunday Post and told my friend, George B. Beal, of my plan. He thought it was great and said he would write a letter to Charlie Sparks and ask him to find a job for me.



"I got to Macon a week before the opening date and was told by A.C. Bradley in the office that the 'old man' got word that I was coming and would find something for me'. As it turned out they sent me over to Sammy Crowell (the wild kid) and Harry Nelson. They had recently come off Ringling-Barnum where they had cotton candy, novelties, and custard. They had been eased out when one of their men told the Miller Brothers who had all the joints on the Big Show that a lot of money was being lost by giving up the three items to Nelson and Crowell even though they were paying for them. So they came over to Downie Bros. and leased the concessions from Sparks.

"I worked around winter quarters painting and cleaning up the joints for a week. Didn't know what I was going to do but had an idea I was going on the seats as a candy butcher. On opening day Harry Nelson put me in the floss

Photo No. 5 — Downie Bros. trucks at Macon, Ga. winterquarters, April 2, 1938. Immediately behind the vehicles is the lot the show will use on opening day, April 8. Photo by Eddie Jackson.



joint and told me that was where I was going to work. He helped me on the blow offs and showed me how to make the stuff, roll the cones etc. We made our own in those days. I was in the cotton candy stand from opening day until the final closing in November, sitting out the two and a half months the show was off the road during the summer."

The 1938 season began at Macon, Ga., April 18 and the April 30, 1938 Billboard reported the event as follows. "Downie Show Has Variety. Chas. Sparks retrenches but standard of performance not lowered. High praise for Downie Bros. Circus which opened at Macon, Ga., April 18. Two capacity crowds. Rain fell just before night performance. Business com-

Photo No. 4 — Downie Bros. trucks at Macon, Ga. winterquarters, April 2, 1938. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

pared very favorable with previous openings.

"In the fact of unsettled business conditions, Manager Sparks made plans for the 1938 Downie show accordingly. Rare wisdom was shown in retrenching and the high standard of the performance was not lowered. With a new spread of canvas, new costumes, and much new equipment, the show made a pleasing impression.

"Sparks, fully recovered from his illness, was on the lot all day. Auspices was Macon Fire Dept.

"Many new faces are in the performance but the executive staff is almost the same. Chas. Katz, asst. manager, is a great help on the show. He recently developed a new stake driver and puller. Notable this year are national advertising hook ups effected by R.O. (Dick) Scatterday, best in the history of the show.

"Among new big show features that won encores were the Joe Hodgini Family in comedy riding act and the Harry Cress troupe of acrobats in outstanding teeterboard novelty. R.J. Carsey, new bandleader won commendation for an excellent musical score. (Author's note. The article also noted the new set up on concessions and observed there were many elaborate stands.)

"The Program was as follows:

1. Spectacle, Hawaiian Revels.
2. Eddie Keck and his sit-down striking mule.

3. Leaps with Tony Scala, Roy Leonhardt, Harry Cress, Caesar De Liberto, Johnny Bossler and Ralph McGehee.
4. Head slide by Mickey Larkin and foot slide by Georgia Larkin.
5. Principal riding acts by Hodgini Family.
6. Double swinging ladders with the Butters Sisters and Cress Sisters, Martha Principena on web.
7. Elephants performed by Ruby Hoyt and Jeanette Wallace under supervision of Buck Taylor, in charge of animals.
8. Comedy acrobats, Leonhardt, Bossler, Scala, Harry La Pearl Trio, and the Larkins, jugglers.
9. Liberty horses performed by Carlos Carreon and Bert Wallace, ponies by Jeanette Wallace.
10. Clown band conducted by Harry La Pearl.
11. Cress acrobatic act with Harry La Pearl, Jack and Betty Cress, De Liberto, Dorothy Park, and Arlene Kenitz.
12. Tight rope elephants performed by Georgia Larkin and Jeanette Wallace.
13. Butters wire act of 5 persons.
14. Trained seals performed by Capt. H.C. Pickard.
15. Clown walkaround.
16. Comedy riding act of Joe Hodgini and comany of 4.
17. Menage number, riders, include Carlos Carreon, Etta Carreon, Ruby Hoyt, Jeanette Wallace, Bert Wallace, Frieda Landers, Marion Shuford, Georgia Larkin, Jewell Poplin, and Butters sisters.
18. Special hippodrome track riding numbers featuring Marion Shuford, the Carreons, Ruby Hoyt, and Jewel Poplin,
19. Iron jaw, Martha Principena; perch act, Mickey and Karl Larkin; web, Avis Butters.
20. Indian riding act, featuring Hodgini Family and tribe of Omaha Indians, featuring Chief No-Knife, Chief Three Trees, and Princess Red Bird.

"The wild west concert features Carlos Carreon and Congress of Cowboys and Cowgirls with Chief No-Knife and troupe of Omaha Indians under management of B.G. Griffith. Bill Leon, wrestler, is added feature. William Stonebrook is with him.

"Mack Kassow, sideshow manager, had the following attractions: Aloa, alligator boy, Milo Larraway, sword swallower, Myrna Karsey, snake enchantress, and Joseph Brantley's Minstrels.

"The 1938 staff included: Chas. Sparks, manager; Chas. Katz, asst. manager; Clint Shuford, treasurer; William Morgan, auditor; Jerome T. Harriman, general agent; James M. Beach, contracting agent; Lee S. Corrao, advance car manager; J.M. Salter, 24 hour agent; Joe Gilligan,



Photo No. 6 — Downie Bros. No. 55, Commissary truck, at Macon, Ga. winter-quarters, April 2, 1938. Man in foreground is unidentified. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

supt. of transportation; A.C. Bradley, legal adjuster; Bert Wallace, equestrian director; B.T. Carsey, bandleader; Harry La Pearl and Roy Leonhardt, producing clowns; Anthony Laska, supt. lights; Buck Taylor, supt. elephants; R.O. Scatterday, advertising banners; Harry Mack, press agent back and announcer; Chester Mays, social security secretary; Harry Miller, supt. tickets; Adolph Crowell and Harry Nelson, supt. privileges; Lawrence Miller, steward."

On Easter Sunday, the day before the opening, services were held under the Downie Bros. big top. Dr. George Stone, pastor of the Mulberry Street Methodist Church, was in charge. The air calliope accompanied the various songs and approximately 250 attended the services.

After Macon the show played Georgia stands at Thomaston, Griffin, and Gainesville before moving on to South Carolina at Spartanburg, April 22. It was at Gastonia, N.C., April 23,

Photo No. 7 — Downie Bros. on lot at Morristown, N. J., May 18, 1938. Menagerie top is at left, marquee in center, with new big top in rear. Photo by Gordon M. Carver.



then went into Virginia for Martinsville, Roanoke, Lynchburg, and Covington.

Evidently the advance crew was shorthanded as the following advertisement appeared in the April 23, 1938 Billboard, "Downie Bros. Circus Wants Experienced union billposters and lithographers at once. Wire, Lee S. Corrao, car manager, Mt. Vernon, Ohio."

The first days of the season saw the show plagued with rain and very mediocre business. It was a warm and pretty day, however, at Martinsville, W.Va., April 25, where the show had gone after leaving Virginia. After several West Virginia dates the show entered Ohio to play Chillicothe, Lancaster, Mt. Vernon, and Barnesville. A series of eight Pennsylvania stands came next beginning with McKeesport, May 9. There was plenty of opposition from other shows in the Pittsburgh area. Hagenbeck-Wallace, Mighty Haag, and Barnett Bros. were in after the take. About this time Tony Scala joined the Joe Hodgini riding act and did well as a straight man.

Downie was scheduled to play day and date with the new Tim McCoy Wild West Show at Altoona, Pa., May 13, but the latter closed in bankruptcy at Washington, D.C. on May 4, the first major circus casualty of what was to be perhaps the worst season of all time.

It took only a few weeks for showmen throughout the country to



Photo No. 8 — Sideshow bannerline on Downie Bros. lot at Morristown, N. J., May 18, 1938. Photo by Gordon M. Carver.

realize that 1938 was going to be an extremely rough season. During the winter and early spring there had been a very rapid downward trend in all business activity. Although there had been some signs in the fall of 1937 that a recessionary trend had set in, businessmen in all fields were shocked at the rapid slide that came during the early months of 1938. It all came so quickly. The Roosevelt administration coined the word "recession" but had Hoover still been around it would have been a "depression" of the worst sort. Many historians term 1938 to have been the worst circus season ever and many of its details have been published in recent years. Because of this we will not repeat too much of it here. Call it what you might, "recession" or "depression", 1938 was a disaster for the American circus. So severe was the recession that not even Sparks who by skillful management had kept his Downie Bros. Circus in the black through the worst times of the early 30's was not immune to it. The first month of the 1938 season was one of the worst Sparks had ever experienced and he was convinced he must take drastic action. At the final Pennsylvania stand at Haxleton, May 17, Sparks posted a notice in the cookhouse that the show would close in two weeks at Portsmouth, Va., May 31, and return to Macon quarters.

Leaving Pennsylvania it went into New Jersey where fortunately it found

business to be very much better, actually great compared to the poor take in recent weeks. CHS Gordon Carver caught the show at Morristown, N.J., May 18, and took the photos which are printed here. Carver also made a few notes on the seating arrangements of the big top as follows.

"Reserve seats (Downie Bros. 1938) — stringers 8 high spaced 6 ft. apart; jacks 5 ft. high. Bibles 2 ft. 4 in. wide, 13 ft. long. Chairs 1-1/3 ft. x 3 ft. x 1-1/2 ft. Long side, 11 board lengths, short side, 7 board lengths. Total seats 1152.

"Blue seats, stringers 12 high and same length as 8 high reserve stringers. Spaced 5 ft. apart."

The show put on a street parade in Westfield, N.J., May 20, in a play for better business. Montclair, the following day, saw sellouts at both performances, the show being forced to close the ticket wagons so great was the crowds. Circus Solly wrote about it in The Billboard saying, "Sellouts these days are something to crow about".

At Camden, May 25, the final date in New Jersey, schools were dismissed at noon so the students could attend the matinee.

Photo No. 9 — Downie Bros. sideshow band on bally platform, Morristown, N. J., May 18, 1938. Photo by Gordon M. Carver.



Moving south the show went into Virginia at Alexandria, May 26, then played Richmond which had a fair matinee and full night house, followed by Newport News, Norfolk, and finally Portsmouth, May 31, for the scheduled closing.

In the meantime the May 21, 1938 Billboard carried the following advertisement, "For Sale, Downie Bros. Circus. Will consider leasing to responsible party. Show and property can be seen as per route. Chas. Sparks." Sparks hoped he might possibly head off the closing by a sale or lease but he had no takers for his offer.

The June 4, 1938 Billboard gave the stunning news to the circus world of Sparks decision to close for the season. The article was headed, "Downie Bros. Circus Closing Set for May 31. Sparks worried about two weeks notice after New Jersey stands give encouragement." It continued in part, "The show started the season planning to play most of its dates along the Atlantic seaboard but because of rainy weather blew two dates and swung into Ohio for a series of stands. The decision to show in Ohio proved to be a bad one. During this session of 'ticket wagon paralysis' Sparks posted a notice in the cookhouse that the show would fold two weeks hence. The advance men were notified to return to the show and billposting stopped at Portsmouth, May 20. Returning to the seaboard to fill contracted dates in New Jersey the show came into an era of prosperity with each town giving good business. The last date, Camden, proved to be more than successful but when the show jumped to Alexandria, Va., faced with an all day rain, there was only a handful of people at the matinee with the tent half filled at night. Due to the heavy rains the lot became unbelievably muddy. The sideshow did no business whatsoever. Sparks was faced with the dilemma to go ahead and close or not. People with the show agreed to take less if Sparks would keep the show going. However, the advance had been paid off in Portsmouth earlier and an application had been filed with the City Council in Macon, Ga. to use the Central City Park quarters starting Thursday night, June 2."

The show did close at Portsmouth and then headed for Macon. The June 11, 1938 Billboard told the story of the closing. Charlie Katz was interviewed and said the recession and long siege of bad weather combined to cut the season short. He said all bookings had been cancelled and chances of returning to the road in 1938 were slight but indicated the show might go out again later if conditions improved. Many of the personnel went on to Macon to wait out the situation while others sought employment with shows or elsewhere.

Things were very quiet at Macon for a month but the July 2, 1938 Billboard

said that Downie Bros. might reopen, depending on crop conditions in the south. It said the equipment and animals were being kept intact. Katz, asst. manager, Clint Shuford, treasurer, Carlos and Etta Carreon, Bert Wallace, and Joe Gilligan were all at Macon quarters looking after the show.

Two weeks later the happy news was given that Downie Bros. would return to the road in August and the July 16, 1938 Billboard carried the following advertisement, "Downie Bros. Circus Opening In August. Wants for big show, performers, wild west people, clowns, feature wrestler for concert, big show bandleader and musicians. Sideshow people, minstrel band and performers. Bosses in all departments. Steward. For the advance, general agent, car manger, press agent, billposters. Sideshow people address John H. (Doc) Oyler, rest, Chas. Sparks."

The situation was just like having two separate seasons in a single year. It was necessary to re-staff the show and put together a performance.

The July 30, 1938 Billboard had this advertisement, "Downie Bros. Circus Opening August 15. Wants two clowns with walkarounds. Feature wrestler for concert. Chevrolet mechanic. Truck drivers. Address, Macon, Ga."

James M. Beach closed as brigade manager of James Heron's World Bros. Circus at Batavia, N.Y., July 20, to take up duties as the new Downie Bros. general agent. Lee S. Carrone resumed his former job as manager of advance cars and Harry Chipman was hired as general press representative.

The Billboard announced in early August that the show would open at Columbus, Ga., August 15, and that it would be the same size as in the spring. There would be several new acts, including the Walter Guice troupe, formerly with Ringling-Barnum which would present the riding Guices, riding act, and an aerial number billed as the Aerial Walters. This family act was featured years ago on the old Sparks Railroad Circus. It was also mentioned that all equipment was being inspected and renovated.

The Aug. 27, 1938 Billboard told the story of the show's reopening with headlines, "Downie Bros. Circus Reopens Big, Columbus, Ga. is first stand, Chas. Sparks states business far ahead of expectations." The article went on to say that while many of those who were with the show in the spring were back there were several new additions. Sparks was quoted, "If Columbus is an example, the South is going to be very good." The show moved in from Macon early Sunday and the fairgrounds lot was used. There were only two days rehearsal. Among the new features which won much applause were the Riding Guices and Chester Barnett's clown numbers.



Photo No. 10 — No. 55, commissary truck and cook tent on Downie Bros. lot, season of 1938. Pfening Collection.

The program was as follows:

1. Tournament.
2. Corine Dearo, cloud swing; Bert Dearo, aerial contortion.
3. Clown walkaround.
4. Elephants by Jeanette Wallace and Ruby Hoyt.
5. Double ladders, Martha Carsey, Avis Butters, and Cress sisters.
6. Aerial Walters, bar act.
7. Clown walkaround.
8. Liberty horses by Bert Wallace and Carlos Carreon; ponies, Jeanette Wallace.
9. Chester Barnett and his hind leg dog.
10. Cress acrobatic troupe of 7 persons.
11. Clown band; Chester Barnett, cornet; Sugarfoot Williams, trombone soloist; Johnny Bossler, trumpet; Mickey O'Brien, bass drum; Fred Wenzel, director; Harold Hall, dancer.
12. Butters wire act (5 persons)
13. Tight rope elephants.
14. Capt. Pickard's seals.
15. Martha Principena, Viola Barnett, and Avis Butters, iron jaw.
16. Riding Guices troupe of 7.
17. Comedy walkaround.
18. Cress comedy acrobatic act; Martha Principena, web; Bert Dearo, frog contortion.
19. Menage riders, Carlos and Etta Carreon, Bert and Jeanette Wallace, Jewel Poplin, Viola Barnett, Marion Shuford, Freida Landers, Ruby Hoyt, Avis Butters.
20. High jumping horses ridden by Carlos and Etta Carreon, Jewell Poplin, and Ruby Hoyt.

The concert features the Carreons with Wild West lineup: Old Faithful horse; Chief No-Knife and Indian tribe; Bill Leon, wrestler.

New sideshow manager, J.H. (Doc) Oyler, had the following attractions: Berny Bernard, inside lecturer, punch, and magic; Madame Rhonda, mentalist; Ali Ben Deb, Oriental wonder worker and fire eater; Aloa, alligator boy; Myrna Karsey, sword swallower; Joe Brantley, bandleader with 7 musicians and minstrel show.

B.T. Carsey led the big show band and had total of 12 men.

The staff included: Chas. Sparks,

manager; Chas. Katz, asst. manager; Clint Shuford, treasurer; William Morgan, secretary; A.C. Bradley, legal adjuster; Barney (Soldier) Longsdorf, supt. props; Charles Ryan, canvas; Roscoe Brown, ring stock; Anthony Lasky, lights; Joe Gilligan, transportation; Arthur Berry, sideshow canvas; Clement (Buck) Taylor, menagerie; Lester T. Miller, steward; W.C. Mays, supt. tickets; Bert Wallace, equestrian director; C.C. Landers, head mechanic. The advance had James M. Beach, general agent; Lec S. Corraoe, manger advance cars; Harry Mack, press back and announcer, and James M. Salter, 24 hour agent. Sam Crowell and Harry Nelson had the privileges.

The show moved from Columbus immediately into the tobacco section of south Georgia playing Albany, Tifton, Waycross, Douglas, and Vidalia to complete the first week. The weather was beautiful, tobacco sales had been high and this combination contributed to what Sparks termed "very satisfactory business". When Downie was at Waycross, August 18, the Mighty Haag Show was only 9 miles away at Blackshear so there was much visiting between the two shows. Downie was at Savannah, August 22, then played Statesboro and Augusta to conclude the present tour of Georgia. The show then moved into South Carolina to play Charleston, Kingstree, Florence, and Mullins. At Florence, Lasses White's Minstrels pulled off the lot as Downie was going on. Arthur W. (Art) Miller, who for several seasons had been general agent of Seils-Sterling Circus, joined Downie as contracting agent. The Seils-Sterling show had recently closed and been sold at auction, another of the many 1938 circus casualties.

The show entered North Carolina at Fayetteville, August 31, and after two more stands in the state, returned to South Carolina to play Conway, then re-entered North Carolina at Wilmington and remained for 19 consecutive stands. The show crossed paths with the Robbins Bros. Circus, now on 21 cars, and featuring the Clyde Beatty Wild Animal act following the close of Cole Bros. The show was tough opposition. Downie beat Robbins into Raleigh, Sept. 10, by a few days where it had a good take. Robbins also did well there having a good afternoon house and straw at night.

The Sept. 10, 1938 Billboard carried this advertisement, "Downie Bros. Circus wants oriental dancer (husband to sell tickets), musical acts, novelty acts. Address John H. (Doc) Oyler, sideshow manager as per route." It appears the sideshow was much stronger after the reopening than it was earlier in the season with Mack Kassow as manager.

Greenville was the final North Carolina date. Then the show moved westward fast crossing Georgia in only three stands, Toccoa, Gainesville, and Rome. According to the route the show had played Gainesville earlier in the season. Reason for the repeat is not known to the author but either bad weather killed the business for the earlier date or there was some other reason the show would play the town twice in a single season.

Alabama was next with seven dates. At Sylacauga, Oct. 3, "King", a 735 pound lion died of old age and complications. At his passing the press boys had fun by proclaiming the state-ly old beast had been formerly owned by the Duke of Windsor who presented him to Sparks in Manitoba in 1921. Happily no wise guy came forth to ask where Sparks had kept the lion after selling his rail show in 1928 until purchasing Downie in 1930. While in Alabama the weather was fine, warm sunshine during the day and cool nights.

Since the show's reopening business could be accurately termed as spotty, with some very good days while others were quite poor. William Burger remembers the situation like this.

"The fall tour was so bad at times that one afternoon show I took in only 15 cents. Sold just three cotton candy which was five cents then. I can also remember some of the big ones too, midway jammed, a few straw houses but far too many quarter and less houses."

The show moved into Mississippi at Columbus, October 9, and played a total of 7 stands in the state. At Greenwood, Oct. 12, the show was on a lot near the one occupied by West Bros. Shows (carnival). While in Mississippi Mrs. Addie Sparks became ill suffering from a heart condition and was sent to a hospital in Jackson where she was confined for an indefinite stay.

The show next crossed the Mississippi River and went into new territory in Arkansas. It was the first visit in this area for the Downie show. Initial stand was Jonesboro which was followed by 8 additional dates. The Parker & Watts Circus pulled off the lot in Searcy, Oct. 20, as Downie was going on. The show moved into Louisiana at Rustin, Oct. 26, and remained in the state for 14 stands. While in Louisiana which was also new territory for Downie Bros. the show played Sunday dates at Leesville, Oct. 30, and Opelousas, Nov.

6, which was a new experience for it in the south. It was virtually impossible to play Sunday dates in any other state in the south. In fact in those days it was difficult to play on Sunday in many parts of the nation.

Bogalusa, Nov. 8, was the final stand in Louisiana, then the show moved eastward rapidly, playing Gulfport, Miss. the next day, followed by Mobile, Ala., Nov. 10, and on to Florida with first stand coming at Pensacola.

As the show began the final dates of the 1938 season, Sparks was quoted in the Nov 12, 1938 Billboard saying that business for the fall tour in the South had been satisfactory. The same issue carried this advertisement, "For Sale, Downie Bros. Circus. Property can be seen as per route, after that, Winter-quarters, Central City Park, Macon, Ga."

Additional Florida stands came at Panama City, Tallahassee, Perry, Ocala, Daytona Beach, Palatka, with the finale of the season at St. Augustine, November 19. The Nov. 26, 1938 Billboard said the overall season had been satisfactory for Downie Bros. The 14 weeks after the reopening on August 15 had seen ideal weather and gratifying business. There had only been three rainy days. Sparks said, "I am proud of the loyalty and cooperation given me by my people. An announcement as to my plans for next season will be given to the Billboard at a date as early as possible."

A few hours after the show's equipment had reached Macon quarters, Sparks boarded a plane for Jackson, Miss. where his wife had been under treatment following her recent illness. The Billboard said her condition is believed to be improved and she should soon be able to go to Macon.

The Dec. 10 1938 Billboard reported that "Queen", one of the Downie elephants, died at Macon quarters. Said to be 84 years old in news reports, she had been in a Santa Claus parade a few days earlier in unusually cold weather. Pneumonia developed and was termed to be the direct cause of death. Queen's death reduced the number of the herd to 7, Tena, Babe, Pinto, Addie, Cora, Inez, and Marion.

Photo No. 11 — Semis No. 92 and 94 used for transporting elephants on Downie Bros. lot, season of 1938. Pfening Collection.



These would make the show's final tour in 1939.

Sparks again advertised the show for sale in the Dec. 17, 1938 Billboard which read as follows, "For Sale, Downie Bros. Circus, 41 Chev. trucks and trailers, all equipped with BK Booster brakes, including 2 sleeping buses complete with bedding. Trailers range from 18 to 25 ft. in length. Equipment may be inspected at Central City Park, Macon, Ga."

Although Sparks himself had made no statements as to his actual intentions a columnist writing in the Dec. 24, 1938 Billboard speculated as follows, "Looks like a rail show for Sparks. All trucks and motorized equipment of Downie Bros. Circus are on sale. Equipment that can be utilized in a railroad show is not being sold. He has been often heard to express a desire to return to railroad show business provided he could make a satisfactory disposition of the Downie Bros. motorized equipment. Actual sale of this equipment has caused local associates to believe he has definitely made up his mind to put out a railroad show."

As the old year came to an end no equipment had been sold and Sparks had not made his intentions public. With the rough season just concluded excess circus equipment was plentiful and could be obtained most reasonably but there were few prospective buyers. Six railroad circuses had answered the starting bell of the 1938 season. Only two would go out in 1939. Also finished off for good were the Tom Mix Circus, Seils-Sterling, Harris Bros., Mighty Haag, and many lesser outfits. The season had been one that showmen could never forget. Although business conditions had picked up some in the fall the country was still in the midst of a serious economic recession.

The 1939 Season

In early January the Downie elephants and ponies were contracted for an indoor circus date in Chattanooga, Tenn. Bert Wallace and Buck Taylor accompanied them.

Sometime during the first weeks of 1939 Mrs. Sparks was able to return to Macon but was confined to their suite in the Hotel Dempsey. Her condition soon worsened and the Feb. 11, 1939 Billboard reported she had been sent to a local hospital. A week later the trade publications advised that Mrs. Sparks



Photo No. 13 — This one sheet upright with likeness obviously of Buffalo Bill was used by Downie Bros. in 1939. Kent Ghirard Collection.

was seriously ill. Circus Solly in the Feb. 18, 1938 Billboard wrote, "Miss Addie as she is probably better known has been one of circusdom's noblest women and a fitting counterpart to her famous husband." The same issue said that activities at Macon quarters were quiet pending an important announcement concerning Downie Bros.

The big announcement came two weeks later. Sparks sold the show, title and all properties to William M. (Bill)

Photo No. 14 — This one sheet depicting various action under the big top was a stock design from Donaldson Lithographing Co. and used by Downie Bros. in 1939. Kent Ghirard Collection.



Moore and his associates, who included T. Leo Moore, his brother of Electra, Texas, H.A. Decker, and Mrs. Eva Moore. Paul M. Conway, local Macon attorney, served as general counsel for the group. Two Georgia corporations were organized, the Southern Circus and Equipment Co. as the holding company and William M. Moore and Company as the operating company. Incorporators were T. Leo Moore, H.A. Decker, William M. Moore, and Paul M. Conway. The holding company was capitalized at \$75,000. Terms of the sale were as follows. Total price to be paid was \$65,000. A down payment of \$5,000.00 in cash was to be made immediately and the balance was to be paid at a rate of \$2,000.00 weekly after the show opened. The new owners planned to open the first week in April and would keep the show out at least 30 weeks until the balance was paid off.

Although T. Leo Moore and H.A. Decker had not previously been in circus business, William "Bill" Moore was quite well known in the circus world. He was a native of Denison, Texas, and had been with Al G. Barnes, Christy Bros., Barnett Bros. and most recently had served as legal adjuster for Howard Y. Bary's Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus.

Only a few days after the sale Mrs. Addie Virginia Sparks died on March 2. Her husband, Charlie Katz, and Jerome T. Harriman accompanied her body to East Brady, Pa. where the funeral and burial were held on March 4. She was 58 at the time of death and had been married to Sparks for almost 40 years. It was a sad day in Macon and throughout the circus world when the news was heard that the beloved "Miss Addie" was gone.

The new owners began immediately to get the show ready for the road. The March 4, 1939 Billboard had the following ad, "Downie Bros. Circus Wants experienced circus billposters and lithographers. Must be capable and drive truck. Address Lee S. Corronoe, Car Manager". The following week this ad appeared, "Side Show People in all lines wanted for Downie Bros. Circus. Freaks, Novelty act, Dancers, and Ticket Sellers who can make openings. Address Milt Robbins."

The March 18, 1939 Billboard said there was much activity now at Downie quarters. Bennie Walsh was head painter with 7 assistants, George Engles was in charge of the carpenter shop and Slim Saunders had the rolling stock. Mickey O'Brien was looking after wardrobe and Carlos Carreon had the menage and liberty stock ready. Other notes said that there would be many new acts in the program and that the show would have a new color scheme for vehicles and other properties, orange and black. Buck Owens had been signed to have charge of the wild west aftershow, Sam Crowell and Harry Nelson would again have the

concessions and plenty of new billing paper would be used.

Several trucks were painted in the new color scheme of orange and black, however, quite a few still had their former colors of red with silver lettering in 1939. Maurice Allaire, who saw the show in 1939, wrote this concerning the new color scheme of Downie motorized equipment that season.

"In 1939 some of the trucks were painted orange and had titles either in solid black or in black shaded in white. Other vehicles had their former colors of red with title in white (or silver)."

It was planned for all vehicles to eventually have the new colors but there was not time before opening to convert all of them to the new scheme. In any event it was a dramatic change as since the initial season of 1926 the Downie baggage trucks had been painted red.

For several years the show had primarily used billing paper from Erie but for 1939 Moore ordered some from U.S. Printing Co. of Kansas City, some from Donaldson Litho. of Cincinnati, and no doubt also used some from Erie. For a couple of years U.S. Print had been running large advertisements in The Billboard for huge quantities of paper at bargain prices. The firm specialized in stock designs and supplied same to many smaller shows in the country. One U.S. Print sheet shown here was used by Barney Bros. in 1937.

Photos taken in 1939 indicate some of the cages had been remodeled. They had regular commercial truck cabs instead of the custom built cabs previously on the cages. Photos also show that the air calliope truck had a different body than the one used in 1936 and earlier. Possibly this air calliope truck was placed into use earlier but the only photos of it which have turned up are dated 1939.

The canvas spread was essentially the same as carried in 1938 with exception of the menagerie tent which now had only two middle pieces.

The March 25, 1939 Billboard said that opening day would be April 6, a week to 10 days earlier than usual, with auspices under the American Legion. Other notes said it had been an exceptionally warm spring and the new orange and black colors were receiving much favorable comment and the show equipment presents an impressive flash. A new contract by the City of Macon for use of Central City Park as winter quarters had been granted assuring the Moores the show could continue to winter in that city.

James M. Beach, general agent, wasn't out contracting long before he learned that the coming season would see plenty of opposition from other circuses. An example was at Parkersburg, W. Va. where Downie was booked for April 25, and Russell Bros.

would be coming in on May 6 and Cole Bros. May 24.

As the 1939 season was imminent T. Leo Moore arrived in Macon from Electric, Texas, a few days before the opening. Only two rail shows were scheduled to go out, Ringling-Barnum, reduced to 80 cars, and Cole Bros. down to 20 cars. The leading motorized circuses would include Downie Bros., Russell Bros. and Parker & Watts. Fewer circuses would hit the sawdust trail this season than in almost anyone's memory. The economic condition of the country had improved slightly but optimism among showowners was at a minimum. Cole Bros. would present the only railroad show street parade and the mudders retaining the daily march would be Parker & Watts and Haag Bros.

The April 15, 1939 Billboard carried a full report of the Downie Bros. opening at Macon, Ga. on April 6. It said that capacity crowds greeted the show at both afternoon and night performances despite a rainy morning and cold evening. Overall show receipts were said to be 30 percent ahead of 1938. Sparks was unable to be on hand to witness the opening of the show under its new owners as he had recently fallen and fractured an arm. Charlie Katz, who had been scheduled to tour with the show as asst. manager, resigned so as to stay in Macon and look after Sparks. Former Downie staffers visiting for the day included Joe Gilligan, transportation supt. for many years who was now with a local gasoline transportation company, and Fred De Ivey, former master builder, now living in retirement. The show got good local publicity as the newspapers carried 22 photos and many stories. Dick Scatterday had the largest number of banners for an opening day in the history of the show.

The 1939 Program was as follows:

1. Opening spectacle, The Parade of Gold, reveals lavish display of costumes, special novel electrical effects with two bands, elephants, and more than 100 persons, mounted and marchers.
2. Clown numbers in 3 rings and on

(Season-1939.)
THOMASTON 7
ONE DAY ONLY
FRIDAY, APRIL

THE ALL NEW AND BIGGER

POPULAR PRICES
CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS **25¢**
ADULTS **50¢**

DOWNIE BROS' CIRCUS

NOW: EVER: GREATEST: MOST POPULAR CIRCUS
A COUNTRY OF AMERICAN CHAMPIONS of the Uniqueness of People of STARS Presenting What Has Been Achieved by Prow and Public as "The Highest Class Circus in the World"

Triple-Sided Menagerie of the World's Rarest Wild Animals
A Herd of Performing Elephants
A SCORE OF PERFORMING HORSES
The Most Beautiful Girls in All Circuses and the GREATEST DANCING HORSES Presenting a Parade of Flash and Beauty Unsurpassed
CONVENTION OF CLOWNS—AN ENSEMBLE OF KINGS AND QUEENS OF COMEDY

FIRST TIME IN AMERICA
"KAMIR"
and His Ballet of Wire Walkers
The "Old West"—showing the Greatest Western Rodeo of the World's Rarest Rodeo Contests. A Truly Big Wild West and Country of Rough Riders of the World.
The Only Big Circus Coming This Year
NEVER DIVIDED NEVER DISAPPOINTING

Circus Tickets on Sale on Circus Grounds at 9 A. M. on Day of Circus

Downie Bros. newspaper ad for Thomaston, Ga., April 7, 1939, used same cut as for 1938 except for different wording inside the banner. Joe Bradbury Collection.

track, featuring Chester Barnett and trio; Eddie Keck, Howard Bryant, Sugarfoot Williams, Sig Bon Homme, Mickey O'Brien, Albert White, Eddie Hendricks, Shorty Sylvester and wife, and Ray O'Day.

3. Headslide, Mickey Larkin, and footslide, Georgia Lund.
4. Alex Brocks (4 people) on ground bars.
5. Double ladders with Helen Chapin, Avis Feister, Olive Bon Homme, Inez Butters.
6. Elephants, performed by Clement (Buck) Taylor.

Photo No. 16 — Interior of Downie Bros. menagerie top at Montclair, N. J., May 20, 1939, showing two cages, concession stand. Photo by Gordon M. Carver.



7. Frank Satiro, hand balancing, ring 1; Everette Correill, head balancing ring 2; Frank Self, hand balancing, ring 3.
8. Clown numbers.
9. Single trapeze numbers, Anna Brock, ring 1; Corinne Dearo, ring 2; Bert Dearo, ring 3.
10. Liberty horses performed in rings 1 and 3 by Carlos Carreon and Bert Wallace; ponies in ring 2 by Jeanette Wallace.
11. Corriell Family, teeterboard and acrobatic act, featuring Earl Corriell in a triple somersault from the spring board to the chair.
12. Concert announcement with lineup headed by Buck Owens; Omaha Indians, cowboys and cowgirls.
13. Royal Five, wire act with Rosina Martinez, Helen Capin, Inez Butters, Avis Feister, and Marshall Chapin.
14. Elephant "wire" acts worked by Jeanette Wallace and Georgia Lund.
15. Corinne Dearo, cloud swing ring 1; Theresa Morales, loop the loop ring 2; and Anna Brock, cloud swing, ring 3.
16. Chester Barnett and hindleg dog, Trixie.
17. Olivia in one arm swings and web.
18. Juggling Larkins.
19. Verne Corriell in table rock.
20. Avis Feister on rings in ring 1; Helen Chapin, iron jaw, ring 2; Bert Dearo, frog contortion, ring 3.
21. Second concert announcement.
22. Theresa Morales, heel and toe catch.
23. Clown numbers.
24. Captain Dalbeanie on wagon wheel.
25. Menage numbers, riders including Carlos and Etta Carreon, Bert and Jeanette Wallace, Jean Allen, Jewell and Charles Poplin, Georgia Lund, Ruby Hughes. Specialties by Kentucky Boy, ridden by Etta Carreon; Amber King, ridden by Jean Allen; Foxy, ridden by Jeanette Wallace; Man, ridden by Carlos Carreon, including dancing, waltz, and rear; rope skipping, rhumba, chicken reel, torch dance.
26. Brock Duo, perch ring 1; Frank Satiro, perch, ring 2, and Larkins, perch, ring 3.
27. High jumping horses, Jewel Poplin on Pop-Eye; Ruby Hughes on Bisco; Carlos Carreon on Amber King; Luckey Strike in a liberty jump and Etta Carreon on Kentucky Boy doing a three bar fire jump.

The 1939 staff was listed as follows: Operated by William M. Moore and Company; William Moore, manager and director; T. Leo Moore, chairman of the board of directors; H.A. Decker, director; Mrs. Eva Moore, director; Paul M. Conway, corporation counsel



Photo No. 17 — Interior of Downie Bros. menagerie top at Montclair, N. J., May 20, 1939, showing elephants and camels. Photo by Gordon M. Carver.

and director; Clint Shuford, treasurer; A.C. Bradley, chief of legal staff; Eddie Allen, asst. treasurer; Bert Wallace, equestrian director; Carlos Carreon, asst. equestrian director; B.T. Carsey, musical director; Milt Robbins, manager sideshow; Eddie Harris, manager pit show; C.C. Landers, supt. of transportation; James M. Beach, general agent; Lee S. Corronoe, manager advertising cars; Art W. Miller, story man and radio exploitation director; James M. Salter, 24 hour agent; W.S. Mays, social security secretary; Sam Crowell and Harry P. Nelson, managers of concessions; P.G. Lowery, director of sideshow band; Buck Owens, director of concert.

Operating department heads included Charles Ryan, big show boss canvasman; Tony Lasky, master electrician; E.S. Reed, supt. sideshow canvas; Mickey O'Brien, wardrobe; Thomas Price, blacksmith and carpenter shops; August Elpert, steward; Jack Fitzgerald, in charge of kitchen equipment; Clement Taylor, supt. elephants and menagerie; Robert Lee Morrison, asst. supt. of ring stock; William Bush, asst. master of transportation; George Ingalls, supt. tire department; Enoch Bradford, ushers; Ray Graves and Albert Yarbrough in charge of front door; Barney (Soldier) Longsdorf, supt. properties.

Band director B.T. Carsey had a total of 12 men.

The sideshow lineup was as follows: Milt Robbins, manager; Chanda, magician and inside lecturer; Mitzi, mentalist; Antone Sanchez, ventriloquist; Princess Luana and her five Royal Hawaiians; Jack Henderson, fire act; Arthur Prince, comedy juggler; P.G. Lowery, band and Georgia Minstrels 12 people.

A midway pit show featured Capt. James Moran who wrestled alligators. This act was discovered in Florida and

signed by Milt Robbins. It created much excitement.

Although the Downie personnel roster in 1939 included several newcomers to the show, likewise, there were several troupers who had formerly served with it who were back on the show in 1939. These included Milt Robbins, sideshow manager; Theresa Morales, talented performer, and Buck Owens, Hollywood western star who had been on the show in 1932. A popular act absent for the first time in several years was Capt. H.C. Pickard and his trained sea lions.

Following the Macon opener the show played two stands in the home state, Thomaston and Griffin, then made a long Sunday jump to Chattanooga, Tenn. Five more Tennessee stands followed and the show was at Bluefield, W.Va., April 17. Moving over into Virginia to play Radford, Roanoke, and Covington, the show then returned to West Virginia at Hinton, April 21, and played another six stands in the state. The initial Pennsylvania date came at Uniontown, April 29, which was followed by Washington the next day. The show went into Ohio at Steubenville, May 2, played Warren, 3rd, then returned to Pennsylvania at Sharon and remained in the Keystone state through May 15.

The May 13, 1939 Billboard said that Downie Bros. had seen only three big days during the first month of the season since leaving Macon. These were at Charleston, W.Va., Roanoke, Va. and Kingsport, Tenn. At Steubenville, O. there was a last minute switch to a smaller lot owned by the city. The show had difficulty getting set up on it and business was light that day. There was a big matinee at Warren, O. due largely to a 15¢ school student ticket tie in. At night the show had better than a half house with temperature in the 30's. The management said the cold weather, other than for a couple of days, had retarded attendance. Sideshow business was also off due to cold weather. The show experienced its first "unfair" paper labeling in Warren, Ohio when practically all



Photo No. 19 — The Larkins, juggling act, during Downie Bros. performance at Montclair, N. J., May 20, 1939. Photo by Gordon M. Carver.

daubs and snipe hits were smeared with "unfair" tags by union billposters. Downie had not signed a contract with the billers alliance union for 1939 hence the difficulty. Scores of lithographs around town on snipe stands were badly mutilated but no attempt was made to molest lithographs or dates in store windows.

The show had much opposition at Harrisburg played May 12. Barnett Bros. had been in earlier while Ringling-Barnum was scheduled for June 3.

Easton, May 15, was the final Pennsylvania stand, and produced a fair night house in chilly weather. The show then moved into New Jersey for five dates. First stand was at New Brunswick, followed by Plainfield, Westfield, Patterson, and Montclair. At Westfield, May 18, the show put on a street parade which the press gave favorable comment. CHS Gordon Carver caught the show at Montclair, May 20, took the photos printed here and made several notes which are as follows.

Downie Bros. 1939 Trucks

- 2 cookhouse
- 4 cages
- 1 office
- 1 ticket trailer
- 1 props
- 1 baggage
- 1 wardrobe
- 1 stringer and rings
- 1 jacks and planks
- 1 planks
- 1 chairs
- 1 big top and menagerie top canvas
- 1 poles
- 1 stake and chain
- 1 lights (3 generators)
- 1 sideshow
- 1 water tank and utility
- 2 elephants (also loads camels)
- 3 horse (14 horses, 6 ponies)
- 1 band sleeper
- 1 bosses sleeper



1 sideshow band sleeper
2 mechanical department

31

Big Top. 110 ft. round with three 40 ft. middles. Main poles 38 ft., quarter poles, 24 ft., side poles 11 ft., Canvas 33 ft. high at ridge. Rings 32 ft. Hipodrome track 12 ft. on front side and 10 ft. on back side.

Menagerie top. 60 ft. round with two 30 ft. middles.

Dining top. 75 ft. x 30 ft. No division within tent, 18 tables, seating 10 or 12 at each. Total seats about 200.

Rings. Rings were 32 ft. outside diameter.

Carver's notes list 2 camels and 6 elephants. The show began the season with 7 — Tena, Babe, Pinto, Addie, Marion, Inez, Cora. However at the end of the season when the show was sold only 6 were listed. Tena is missing from that list. It is possible she was sold during the season or shortly after it closed but in any event she was gone before the sale of the show at auction. As late as 1936 the show had four camels. In all probability two had died before the 1939 season or disposed of elsewhere.

The annual New England tour began at Bridgeport, Conn. May 22 and was followed by four additional stands in the state. Downie was at Westerly, R.I., May 27, then played New Bedford and Fall River in Massachusetts. The show returned to Rhode Island for Newport, May 31, then went back into the Bay State for Quincy, Lynn, and Newburyport, all of which gave good business with an exceptionally good take coming at Lynn.

The show moved into New Hampshire at Portsmouth, June 5, with four more stands in the state to come. It was at Manchester, June 7, where Ringling-Barnum was scheduled to play a month later.

The June 3, 1939 Billboard said that Capt. Dalbanie fell from the top step of his pedestal while performing on the wagon wheel during his act but his quick thinking and acrobatic ability

Photo No. 22 — Downie Bros. performing elephants in action under the big top at Montclair, N. J., May 20, 1939. Photo by Gordon M. Carver.

enabled him to land safely on the ground.

The show returned to Massachusetts at Lawrence, July 9, and had two packed houses. Downie was now getting some of the best business it would experience all season. After four more dates in the Bay State, the show returned to New Hampshire to play Keene, Claremont, Laconia, and Woodsville. Vermont came next with stands at Montpelier, Burlington, St. Albans, Richford, and Newport. It was at Berlin, N.H., June 26, then moved into Maine at Lewistown the next day.

At Waterville, Maine, June 29, the show used the fairgrounds lot. There was a fair matinee crowd and about two-thirds house in the evening. The sideshow also did fairly good business.

The June 24, 1939 Billboard said that Dee Aldrich now had a "Headless Girl" exhibit on the midway using a 40 x 60 waterproofed canvas. The display was transported on a specially built trailer and was managed by Ringling Red Maynard.

After nine stands in Maine the show played Dover, N.H., July 7, then went back into Massachusetts for eight dates. The show played East Providence, R.I., July 18, then jumped back and forth between Connecticut and Massachusetts for the last four dates in New England. The final stand came at Tarrington, Conn., June 22, then the show headed for stands in New Jersey. The show was at Garfield, Perth Amboy, Red Bank, Asbury Park, and Camden. Russell Bros. was also in the state and the August 12, 1939 Billboard said that Jersey shore dates had been okay for both Downie and Russell. While Downie was at Garfield, Russell was close by at Freehold. Perth Amboy and Red Bank gave Downie two good houses and Asbury Park saw

a fine afternoon house with near capacity at night. The final New Jersey stand at Camden, July 28, gave only fair business.

The show was at Annapolis, Md., July 29, then made a Sunday run to Richmond, Va. which was played July 31 with the night house being a sellout.

Nine additional stands in Virginia followed. While at Lynchburg, Aug 3, a bad storm struck and badly damaged the big top. The canvas was well worn at the time having been in use since opening day 1938. A rush order was placed with Baker-Lockwood and a replacement big top was delivered at Suffolk, August 9. Whether the top was new or used is not known to the author. It is assumed to have been the same size as the former one, 110 ft. round with three 40's. A new cook was hired and a dining tent was purchased from Baker-Lockwood while the show was in Virginia.

The August 5, 1939 Billboard said there had recently been several performance changes. Carlos and Etta Carreon left to play fairs, Charles Poplin was now riding the high jumps and working liberty horses, Eddie Hendricks was riding menage, and Ruby Hoyt had replaced Georgia Lund in the Larkin juggling act. Swede Johnson was a new addition in clown alley. Another note said that Buck Taylor recently had to dispose of a lion due to old age. It was reported a week later that Charles and Jewell Poplin and Everette Correill were doing a fine job in the wild west aftershow.

The show claimed it had set an attendance record in Norfolk, Va. and indicated its business for the past few weeks had been ahead of that in the area in recent seasons. Competition was heavy as Downie Bros., Russell Bros., and Parker & Watts were all after the better spots in Virginia as well as North Carolina where Downie was headed after its stand in Emporia, Va., August 10. Downie played seven stands in North Carolina beginning with Raleigh and ending with Asheville, August 18. Russell Bros. had played Asheville two days earlier and Parker & Watts was scheduled for August 28. Cole Bros. had booked Asheville for September as well as Hickory, another town played by Downie, but cancelled both when that show suddenly closed for the season at Greenville, Tenn. on September 20. Even though Hickory was cancelled by Cole, that town had still seen three circuses in 1939 — Barnett Bros., April 7, Downie Bros. August 15, and Parker & Watts, August 21.

Departing North Carolina Downie played a single stand in Tennessee at Maryville, August 19, then moved into Kentucky for 12 consecutive dates. The show got excellent publicity in Maysville, Ky., August 30, and the next day in Lexington there was a special performance given on the rear lawn of

Good Samaritan Hospital for crippled children.

The final stand in Kentucky was at Elizabethtown, September 2, and then the show made a long Sunday run to Nashville, Tenn. for performances on Monday, September 4. While on the Sunday run, the news was flashed throughout the country that England and France had declared war on Germany and that World War II was now a reality.

Jess Adkins, co-owner of Cole Bros., said his show suffered a dramatic drop in business immediately following the start of the war in Europe and this seemed to be the case with most of the other circuses on tour.

After Nashville the show moved immediately into Alabama with first stand coming at Huntsville. Other dates in the state were at Anniston, Birmingham, and Tuscaloosa. Along here some changes in routing were made. The show had booked Mobile for Sept. 19 but cancelled and never billed the city. However Russell Bros. did keep its date there on September 30. Downie went westward to Mississippi with initial date at Columbus, Sept. 9, followed by six other stands in the state. The first Sunday date of the season came at Rayville, La., September 17, and the show remained in Louisiana for 11 stands including a two-dayer in Baton Rouge.

Not much news of the show's activities appeared in the trade publications during this period, but the Sept. 23, 1939 Billboard said that the Vick Nelson family which had displayed the big snakes in the sideshow left to play fairs. The same article advised that Cuban Mack and company had joined the sideshow several weeks ago.

The Sept. 30, 1939 Billboard said a long season was planned for Downie Bros. and that it expected to stay out until November 21 closing in Florida or southern Georgia as customary. Although the show had good business at Natchez, Miss., September 15, in fine weather, and other Mississippi stands were also fairly good, A.C. Bradley advised that business had been off for some time. The article said the show was now moving on 36 trucks and had obtained some new canvas in Anniston, Ala. but no details were given. In all probability it was either for the sideshow or menagerie both of which should be getting in pretty bad shape by now.

P.N. Branson joined the show as general agent in Natchez and proceeded to route it into territory not played by Downie Bros. before. The show moved into Texas to play Orange, Sept. 29, and was at Port Arthur the next day when Charles and Jewell Poplin left to work theaters. Downie was at Texas City, October 1, and remained in the state throughout the entire month of October. No doubt the Moores were



Photo No. 23 — Downie Bros. on lot, season of 1939. In foreground is No. 88, mechanical department truck, and at left is No. 28, air calliope. Pfening Collection.

instrumental in having Branson route the show into their home state and hopefully establish the fine reputation there that it enjoyed in other parts of the country. Goose Creek, Oct. 3, produced a two-thirds matinee and capacity night house despite rain and a muddy lot. The show moved up through eastern Texas and then headed westward. It was at Gainesville, October 11, where it was welcomed by numerous CFA members in that city and also personnel of the local Gainesville Community Circus. There was a large matinee crowd but business at night was off probably due to the cold and damp weather. Johnny Farthing, founder of the Gainesville Community Circus, joined to work a liberty act and appear in the concert for the remainder of the season.

Harley Sadler visited the show at Sweetwater, October 15, with 30 members of his repertoire show company. He wrote The Billboard praising the band as one of the best he had heard in years and said the show deserved much better patronage than it received but noted that economic conditions were not so good in that particular section at present.

The Nov. 4, 1939 Billboard said that Downie Bros. was considering wintering in Ft. Worth. T. Leo Moore was quoted that buildings adjoining the Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum in Arlington Heights were being offered by local groups through the Chamber of Commerce to the show for quarters. Moore said that business through north Texas was okay but the matinee at Ft. Worth, October 20, was hurt by record hot weather for October.

Texarkana, November 1, was the final Texas stand, then the show entered Arkansas at Camden. At El Dorado, November 3, there was a fair matinee and good night house despite unsettled and cold weather. The show

then played Pine Bluff, Hot Springs, and was at Little Rock, November 7, when it suddenly closed for the season. It had been scheduled to play Memphis, Tenn. the next day but instead moved into temporary winter-quarters in North Little Rock. Bookings at Jackson, Tenn. and several spots in Mississippi were also cancelled. Fans in Memphis were particularly disappointed over the cancellation because for the first season in years that city had not had a circus.

Although the show was in financial difficulty there was no indication of this in the first reports published in the trade publications. Bill Moore told The Billboard that the show was only temporarily stored in North Little Rock and that it would return to Macon, Ga. quarters following the appearance of a number of acts of the show at the Shrine Circus in Houston, Texas, Nov. 27-Dec. 2. Moore sounded as if everything was fine with the show and even gave the cheery news that Downie Bros. would be on rails in 1940.

A short time later the stock, elephants, and considerable equipment departed for Houston and the Shrine date went on as scheduled. Left in North Little Rock were the caged animals and other equipment not needed in Houston.

For the remainder of the year there appeared practically nothing in the trade publications concerning Downie. There was a short note in The Billboard saying that some of the animals, probably the camels, were used in the Nativity Story during the Christmas time in Houston. The show sent out its usual Christmas cards with the "See you in 1940" theme.

The Dec. 30, 1939 Billboard in summarizing the circus season just concluded headed the report, "Circus Again Takes It On The Chin" and proceeded to say that business was somewhat better in the spring than for the same period in 1938 but patronage failed to hold up through the summer. Business for Downie Bros. was termed

as spotty. Attendance the early part of the season was light, picked up later, then dropped off in the fall. No shows were reporting any big money in 1939. Although the circus casualties were fewer than a year ago, history would later write that 1939 finished off two of the largest motorized shows on the road — Downie Bros. and Parker & Watts, and almost knocked out Russell Bros. A curious advertisement also appeared in the Dec. 30, 1939 *Billboard* which read, "Circus For Sale. Complete. Very Reasonable. Address, Manager, 4410 LaBranch, Houston, Texas." Could this have been Downie Bros.? There was no comment or other information in subsequent issues.

The Jan. 6, 1940 *Billboard* said that Downie's return to Macon was delayed by pending Texas dates. The story said that T. Leo Moore notified the Macon City Council that Downie Bros. equipment would be moved to Macon upon completion of the Houston Shrine Circus, which he said was successful and there were offers pending from other Texas indoor circuses. Moore left the impression that as soon as all of the prospective engagements were fulfilled, the show would indeed return to Macon as originally planned. A few weeks later *The Billboard* advised that the Downie equipment was still stored in Houston and North Little Rock and there was no activity at all in Macon quarters.

Several weeks of silence passed and nothing further was mentioned concerning the Downie situation until the March 2, 1940 *Billboard* told the plight of the menagerie animals left in North Little Rock. The article said that Mayor O.W. Neely and W.R. Sprott, supt. of the Little Rock Municipal Zoo, had rescued three leopards, a tiger, a monkey, and a dying kangaroo and had sent them to the local zoo. Part of the account read as follows.

"Hearing reports of 'deplorable conditions' existing in a mule barn on East Washington Avenue where winter quarters had been established, the mayor, Sprott and several others inspected the barn. They found the animals in their cages. Air was damp and the one stove was found to be inadequate to provide sufficient heat. A keeper said several animals had died. The mayor authorized Sprott to have the animals moved to the zoo and directed sanitary inspector Flake to 'have the entire place cleaned up at once'. The keeper said he had received only \$5.00 during the past two months to purchase food for himself and the animals."

The article concluded saying that most of the circus equipment and animals had been sent to Houston. A later note said the kangaroo died at the Little Rock Zoo on February 21.

A week later the circus world got the true picture of the Downie situation. The March 9, 1940 *Billboard* said that

Attorney O.S. Simpson of Houston had been named receiver for Downie Bros. Circus by Judge Norman Atkinson after the filing of a petition in 11th District Court by Charles Sparks, former owner of the show. Defendants named were William M. Moore of Wichita Falls, Texas, doing business as Downie Bros. Circus, the Southern Circus and Equipment Co., and W.M. Moore and Co. The article set forth the terms of the sale of the show to Sparks in the spring of 1938 (as related in this article earlier) and said that three consecutive payments had been missed and accordingly Sparks was demanding the payment of \$16,500 balance which he claimed was due him. Sparks also contended the down payment was actually only \$3,500.00 instead of the \$5,000.00 called for in the sale contract. At the court hearing evidently the matter of the menagerie animals in Little Rock came up and the defendants denied the charge of improper feeding and care of them. It was also mentioned that for the past several weeks the show had been wintering in Houston Heights.

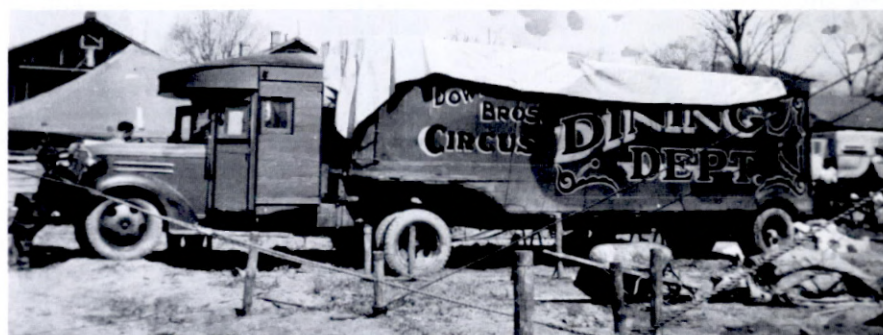


Photo No. 24 — Semi No. 70, dining department, on Downie Bros. lot, season of 1939, is painted in new color scheme of orange with title in black trimmed in white. Photo by William Koford (Al Conover Collection)

The receiver got into action promptly and the following advertisement appeared in the March 23, 1940 *Billboard* — "DOWNIE BROS. CIRCUS, including title, To be offered for sale in immediate future. Inventory of assets and other information furnished on request to O. Strother Simpson, Chronicle Building, Houston, Texas."

CHS Gordon Potter answered the advertisement and received a copy of the inventory. He has loaned us this valuable document along with the letter from the receiver and both are printed here. It will be noted there is no mention of the caged menagerie animals or their vehicles. It is assumed the animals lived out their days in the Little Rock Zoo. Disposition of the four cages is not known to the author but probably they were confiscated and sold by officials in Little Rock. Only 21 vehicles appear on the

receiver's inventory. The remainder were either disposed of in Little Rock or Houston prior to the court action.

The auction of Downie Bros. assets was held in Houston, May 4, 1940 and the May 11, 1940 *Billboard* told the story with headlines. "Downie Show on the Block. Sale brings \$7,200.00 with most animals, equipment, going to Frank J. Walter." The article then read in part, "Last performance of Downie Bros. Circus was given Wednesday before a small audience. With little advance publicity the show went on the auction block at 11 a.m. with Harry W. Thrower, auctioneer, and circus employees putting the animals through their tricks and doing everything to raise bids. The sale which ran 7 hours and 20 minutes was under order of District Judge Norman Atkinson. A total of \$7,200.00 was realized on the property, except the big top which was tied up. (Author's note: No doubt Baker-Lockwood had not been paid in full and still held title to it.) by the receiver, O.S. Simpson. Bidders were few. Frank J. Walter of Houston bought elephants, Babe, Cora,

Inez, Marion, Addie, and Pinto (said to be 80 years old). Bidding on the 2 camels was fairly lively. They were sold to A.W. Kennard who said he bought them for Walter. The six performing ponies went to Clark Henry of Houston for the F & M Jersey Dairy, for use of children. Trucks were bought by Houston cattle men and wrecking and salvage companies. The dancing horses were acquired by various local persons with practically a horse to a bidder. Equipment was in a rundown condition. A few things were sold at private sales prior to the auction. Among the bidders were Earl Lindsay, formerly with Cole Bros., W.F. Palmer, former owner of Palmer Bros. Circus, John Asterman and Harry Calvert, concessionaires and Martin Russell, local amusement park operator and representative of Rubin and Cherry Shows which played here this week under the Elks.

Former Downie Bros. employees with the show to the last were Irvin Arnold, horse trainer, Harry Miller, general supt., Riley McCauley, elephant trainer, Frank Martin and Ernest Sullivan.

The article concluded by stating the

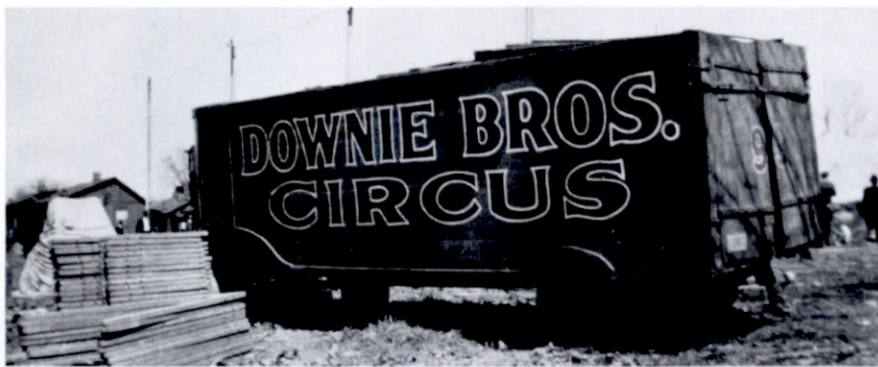


Photo No. 25 — Downie Bros. Semi No. 99, planks, painted in new color scheme, season of 1939. Photo by William Koford (Al Conover Collection)

property had been in Houston since the Shrine Circus date last November. Cost of the show as result of being tied up was about \$2,000.00.

As mentioned earlier the elephant Tena was not listed on the receiver's inventory and had either been sold during the season or after it closed. Chang Reynolds says he has never been able to locate her for 1940-41 but in 1942 she belonged to Russell Hall and was later sold to the Al G. Kelly-Miller Bros. Circus.

Frank Walter, who had purchased the remaining six Downie elephants, sold five of them, Babe, Addie, Cora, Inez, and Marion to Wallace Bros. Circus, owned by Ray W. Rogers, several weeks after the receiver's sale. The former Downie semi which had transported them also went to Wallace Bros. The immediate disposition of Pinto after being acquired by Walter is not known to the author. Chang Reynolds says there was a Pinto on Kay Bros. Circus in 1941 and he believes this was the same animal. After that Chang lost track of her but seems to recall that Bill Woodcock Sr. once said she had been sold to a Mexican outfit.

The large male elephant, Teddy, which Downie sold to Kay Bros. following the 1936 season was on that show in 1937 and 1938 and then was

sold to the World of Mirth Shows (railroad carnival). He was there in 1939, 1940, and 1941 until he was executed during the summer after going bad. An interesting photo is printed here showing Teddy while on the World of Mirth Shows.

If the figures given the Billboard of the Downie sale are correct, then Sparks should have netted a little over 5 G's after deduction of the various court costs estimated at \$2,000.00. How much, if any, he might have received from sales prior to the auction is not known to the author. The Moores

This letterhead was one of the last pieces of art done by the late Roland Butler. It was executed for Lawrence Higgins in 1959, who had recently purchased the Downie Bros. title and had plans to put out a canvas show using that name but it never materialized. Color scheme has the title in red lettering trimmed in black. The circle in center is in red with the numeral "3" in yellow. Wording "Big" and "Ring" are in black with gold background. Yellow, red, and black complete the coloring for the clown and elephant. Joe Bradbury Collection.



75 NORTH MOUNTAIN AVENUE, MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

LAWRENCE HIGGINS
PRESIDENT

retained the Downie Bros. title as it didn't revert to Sparks. It would appear that Sparks didn't lose too much on the deal. In any event he was not interested in getting back into circus business himself. William, "Bill" Moore later began a long association with the Clyde Beatty Circus.

The Downie Bros. title lay dormant until it was purchased by the late Lawrence Higgins of Montclair, N.J. Mr. Higgins, who it was rumored was planning on putting out a new Downie Bros. Circus, wrote me on Dec. 5, 1972 the following (in part).

"Back in 1959 when good fortune in business permitted me to start chasing dreams, I purchased from T. Leo Moore of Electra, Texas, the Downie Bros. title. With the title legally secured, my prospective general agent and I, went down to Palmetto, Fla. to see the late great Roland Butler, who agreed to execute the labor of love in designing a Downie Bros. letterhead for me. I believe this was the last creative art work that Butler ever executed since his eyes and hands were not working properly and it took him two weeks with the pen to complete the letterhead. Butler's fee for the letterhead and a couple of newspaper mat designs was \$65.00.

"I later bought Ed Widemann's elephants and trouped them for three seasons on the suitcase circuit with the very wonderful Bert and Marie Pettus handling them. A good number of fans were pleased with the billing — Downie Bros. Military Elephants. It was not lucrative.

"I have briefly been owner of the Hunt and Mills Bros. equipment but the acute problem of getting a show contracted effectively — my bitter experiences in this regard could be described as 'due to dissatisfaction' — have perhaps deferred another round under canvas for the mythical Downie Bros.

"The letterhead Butler did for me is apparently admired since at least three other shows all 'borrowed' it, although carefully obliterating the artists' signature. Incidentally Butler succeeded in making an elephant smile in the drawing — I think it is around the eyes."

Higgins revival of Downie Bros. never took place and his untimely death in 1975 ended this dream. What disposition, if any, was made of the Downie title is not known to the author. It is assumed it is currently owned by his estate or heirs.

In the passing years since 1939 critics of the Moore's operation of Downie Bros. have been many. Some say the downfall of the show was due to the Moore's methods, pointing out they did not operate as "Sunday Schoolish" as did Sparks. Who did? Others say it was folly to route the show into new territory for it, such as Texas. Other

various and sundry reasons are advanced by those acquainted with the situation and those who were not for the show's downfall. Looking at the matter in an objective manner it seems remarkable that with no more financial base than the Moores had and having to come up with a payment to Sparks of 2 G's each and every week they kept it going as long as they did. Even C.W. Webb, who perhaps ran the tightest 'ship' of any in the business at the time almost went under in 1939 with his Russell Bros. Circus. Webb's circus was paid for and he survived, but business conditons in 1939 looking in retrospect can only be termed as

bad. Had the Moores survived the season and made it up until the lush World War II years no telling how long the show would have been on the road.

I would like to thank the following individuals who aided me greatly with the research and illustration of this history of the Downie Bros. Circus: Chang Reynolds, Fred Pfening, Jr.; Warren H. Wood, Fred Phillips, Roger Boyd, Gordon Potter, Wes Herwig, John Cutler, Don Marcks, Maurice Allaire, Kent Ghirard, Gordon Carver, Al Conover, W.W. Burger, Charlie Campbell, Gale Ahrens, Bruce Tracy, Ronald C. Gore, Walter B. Hohenadel, and the Circus World Museum.

INVENTORY OF RECEIVER

NO. E-264397

DOWNIE BROTHERS CIRCUS
VS
WILLIAM M. MOORE ET AL

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF
HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS
11TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE OF SAID COURT:

Comes now O. Strother Simpson, in his capacity as receiver herein, and files this his inventory of the assets of Downie Brothers Circus, being the assets of the receivership estate, such inventory being in accordance with and pursuant to the order of this Honorable Court heretofore entered herein.

TRUCKS

IDENTIFYING NUMBER & MAKE	YEAR MODEL	MOTOR NUMBER
#11 1½ ton Chevrolet (Office Truck)	1934	4200268
#17 1½ ton Chevrolet (Closed wardrobe)	1934	4026336
#28 1½ ton Chevrolet (Air calliope—in good condition)	1931	183388
#56 1½ ton Chevrolet (Closed body chair truck)	1933	3577139
#61 1½ ton Chevrolet (Open, pole truck)	1931	2764620
#69 1½ ton Chevrolet (Closed sleeper)	1931	2630329
#70 1½ ton Chevrolet (Dining)	1937	514537
#75 1½ ton Chevrolet (Power plant)	1936	6238424
#78 1½ ton Chevrolet (Open stringer truck)	1933	3986878
#80 1½ ton Chevrolet (Water truck)	1930	1735962
#88 1½ ton Chevrolet (Closed mechanic's truck, containing two generators, various other odd engine parts and tools)	1937	315781
#90 1½ ton Chevrolet (Canvas truck)	1934	4615574
#92 1½ ton Chevrolet (Elephant truck)	1936	5798726
#94 1½ ton Chevrolet (Elephant truck)	1936	6030494
#96 1½ ton Chevrolet (Stake and chain)	1934	4322712
#99 1½ ton Chevrolet (Closed, plank truck)	1937	317131
#100 1½ ton Chevrolet (Horse truck, deep sides, no top)	1935	4778573
#200 1½ ton Chevrolet (Horse truck, deep sides, no top)	1933	3986864
— 1½ ton Chevrolet (Pickup)	1937	541760

SEMI TRAILERS

	LENGTH
#66 Taylor (1937 1½ ton Chevrolet truck for trailer; Texas 1939 license No. 227092)	22 ft.

LIGHT 2-WHEEL TRAILERS

#3 Homemade (Office and ticket dispensary; pulled by #69)	1935	14 ft.
--	------	--------

LIVESTOCK (HORSES)

1 Chestnut sorrel gelding, 17 hands high, about 9 years old, named Amber King.



Photo No. 20 — Different view of The Larkins, juggling act, during Downie Bros. performance at Montclair, N. J., May 20, 1939. Photo by Gordon M. Carver.



Photo No. 27 — Semi No. 56, chairs, on Downie Bros. lot, season of 1939, still had former color scheme of red with title in white. Photo by William Koford (Al Conover Collection)

Photo No. 32 — The Downie horse truck No. 100 is shown here parked in front of a junk yard in Houston, Texas, on May 11, 1940, following the auction. Pfening Collection.



- 1 Chestnut sorrel gelding, 16 hands high, about 12 years old, named Kentucky Boy.
- 1 Brown and white mare, 12 hands high, about 10 years old, named Tonto.
- 1 Red Bay gelding, 14 hands high, about 10 years old, named Popeye.
- 1 Red bay gelding, 14 hands high, about 10 years old, named Sonnyboy.
- 1 Dark bay gelding, 14 hands high, about 10 years old, named Biscoe.
- 1 Dark bay gelding, 14 hands high, about 10 years old, named Luckystrike.
- 1 Dark bay gelding, 11 hands high, about 10 years old, named Foxie.
- 1 Black horse about 16 hands high, about 9 years old, named Barney.
- 1 Red Sorrel gelding, 12 hands high, about 9 years old, named Charlie.
- 1 Black horse, 14 hands high, about 10 years old, named Don.
- 1 Black horse, 14 hands high, about 10 years old, named Marvich.
- 1 Black horse, 14 hands high, about 11 years old, named Pat.
- 1 Red sorrel gelding, 16 hands high, about 11 years old, named Mann.

(All trained)

ANIMALS

- 6 female Indian elephants, "PINTO, BABE, CORA, INEZ, MARION, ADDIE". (1 oldest approximately 80 years of age, remaining elephants young)
- 2 male camels

PONIES

- 1 black & white mare, about 9 years old, named Queen.
- 1 Chestnut gelding, about 9 years old, named Gillie.
- 1 Chestnut sorrel gelding, about 9 years old, named Goldie.
- 1 Seal bay mare, about 10 years old, named Trinket.
- 1 Black & white mare, about 11 years old, named Spot.
- 1 Black mare, about 11 years old, named Diamond.
- 1 Brown mare mule, about 10 years old, named Molly.

(All trained)

TENTS

Dining tent, 30 ft x 70 ft.

Marquee, 20 ft x 30 ft.

Complete "Big Top" tent equipment, including complete side walls, poles, seats (accommodating about 2,500), 1,500 folding chairs (in No. 56 truck), complete rope and other tent paraphernalia. Dining room tent equipment complete including tables, seats, 2 stoves, (field army stoves)

MISCELLANEOUS PROPERTIES

- 1 15kw light plant, powered by Hercules motor #223171.
- 1 15kw light plant, powered by Hercules motor #223777.
- 1 15kw light plant, powered by Chevrolet motor #4078424.
- Cables, lamps, fixtures
- 1 air calliope, Joseph Ori make, complete with motor and blower.
- Office equipment (contained in No. 11 office truck), two desks, 1 typewriter, 1 adding machine, 2 chairs, one safe, other miscellaneous office circus equipment.
- Complete harness and leather equipment for all horses, ponies and animals, including 12 sets horse trappings, 12 flat saddles, 11 double bit bridles, 2 single bit bridles, 20 saddle pads, 9 safety girths, 13 bandages (for legs of horses), 1 electric clipper, 14 horse blankets, 1 jumping bridle and trapping, 14 horse halters, Complete pony and mule equipment including 6 sets of leather trappings for halter for ponies, one trapping bridle and halter for mule.
- Complete wardrobe and leather trapping for elephants, camels, property men, etc.
- Canvas troughs for all horses, ponies, and mule.
- Complete set rubber cables for lights, including 5 rolls, approximately 100 ft., 2 inches main line rubber cables; approximately 4000 ft. light rubber cables.
- 15 metal uprights (12 ft. high) for lights, 4 elephant tubs, 3 sets 32 ft. ring curbs (39 pieces 8 ft.), 30 pieces (approximately) sledges, picks, hoes, 50 (approximately) metal flares, 1 vehicular automatic barrel greaser.
- Spare tires (trucks, trailers) approximately 25.
- Various other miscellaneous circus equipment.

STATE OF TEXAS:

COUNTY OF HARRIS:

BEFORE ME, the undersigned authority, on this day personally appeared O. Strother Simpson, known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument, who, being duly sworn, states that he is receiver of Downie Brothers Circus, having heretofore been appointed to such office by the Court in the above mentioned suit, that he is cognizant of the facts set out in the foregoing instrument, and that the above and foregoing is a true and correct inventory of all property received by him as the aforesaid receiver.

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me the undersigned authority on this the _____ day of March 1940.

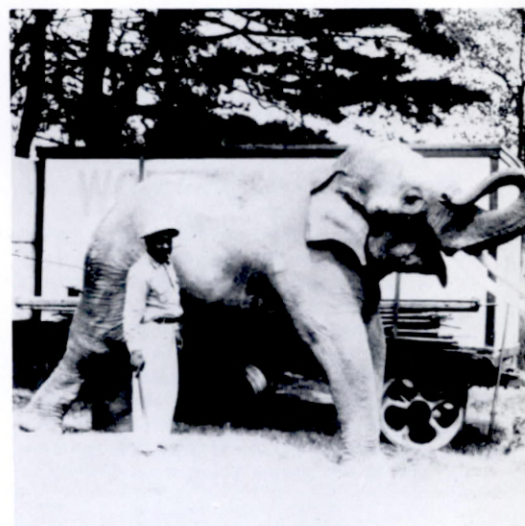


Photo No. 31 — Former Downie Bros. male elephant, Teddy, on World of Mirth Shows about 1940. Baggage wagon is in background, Maurice Allaire Collection.

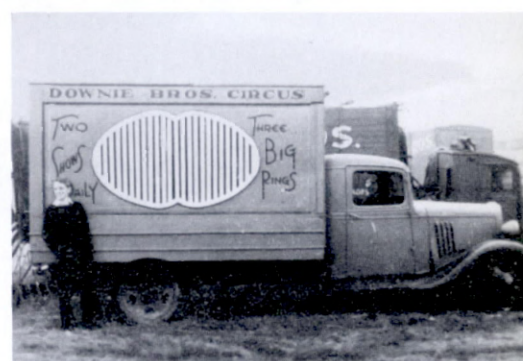


Photo No. 15 — No. 28, air calliope, truck on Downie Bros. lot, season of 1939. Pfening Collection.

TWO LONG TIME CHS MEMBERS DIE

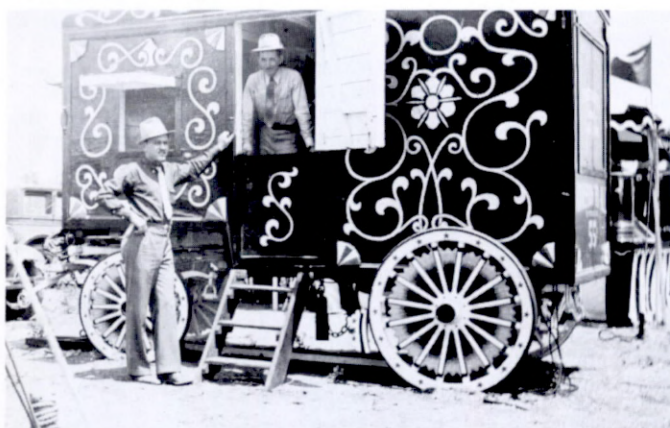
Charles N. Sateja, of Hadden Heights, N.J., Director of Division 3 of the CHS, died on July 28, 1976. CHS No. 246, Chuck had been a member for over 30 years. In 1935 he began his circus career with Lewis Bros. Circus, and since then performed with Cole Bros., Sells-Sterling, Dalley Bros., Hunt Bros., King Bros. and a number of shows in Europe. Most recently he was assistant to Bill Ballantine at the Ringling-Barnum clown college.

Paul F. Van Pool, of Joplin, Mo., CHS No. 136, died on August 9, 1976. Also a member of the CHS for over 30 years, Paul was active in hosting a CHS convention in Joplin in 1961. A long time collector of circus material, Paul was also an expert photographer, having made some of the finest circus motion pictures in the country. His still photos are valuable for historic use.

Two New Wagons In Baraboo

On October 2, 1976 the Circus World Museum's lowboy trailer returned from the West Coast bringing two additional outstanding wagons.

The Ken Maynard Wild West ticket wagon, was last used on that show in 1936. It was first recorded as used on the Howe's Great London Circus from 1920 to 1922. In 1923 and 1924, it was used by Golden Bros. and in 1925 and 1926 was on George Christy's Lee Bros. The wagon was part of those purchased by Ken Maynard from George Christy in 1936. The SWAN bandwagon and the #116 air calliope were also in the group going from Christy to



Maynard. The U.S. Tent & Awning Co., in Los Angeles, Ca., purchased all of the Maynard wagons after the one stand tour of that show. This firm rented the wagons to film studios and later sold them to Bradley & Kaye amusement part in Hollywood. The wagon was recently acquired by Harold G. Davidson of Burbank, Ca., who restored it to its original strength and beauty. Mr. Davidson donated the wagon to the Circus World Museum.

After picking up the Maynard wagon in

California the Museum truck went to Phoenix, Ariz., and picked up the Hagenbeck-Wallace cage #22. This cage was built with others, also now at the Museum, in 1925 by Bill Curtis, in the Peru, Ind., winterquarters. From 1925 to the final year it remained with the Hagenbeck-Wallace show. Following the close of the show in 1938 in Riverside, Ca. all of the equipment was moved to the Al G. Barnes quarters in Baldwin Park, Ca. When the Arthur Bros. Circus went on rails in 1945. It

was outfitted with Hagenbeck-Wallace equipment. This wagon was on the Arthur show, and was left in the Phoenix area. It was owned and rebuilt by Marshall Long of Apache Junction, Ariz. In recent years the cage has been owned by Robert Winne, of Pheonix. The wagon was purchased in the summer of 1976 by Paul Ingrassia, Rockford, Ill. and Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Columbus, Ohio, who have placed it on permanent loan to the Circus World Museum.

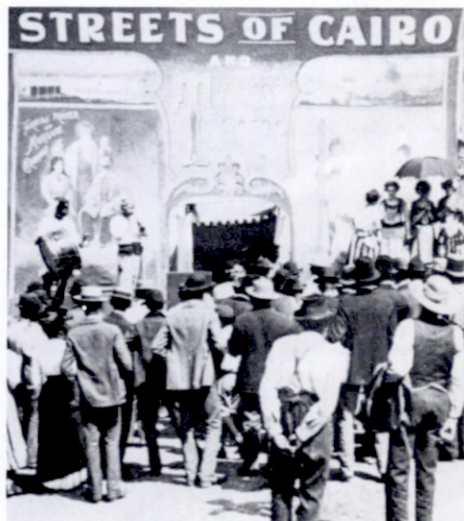
WHAT IS A FLAGEOLET?

Many readers are probably wondering after reading the tribute to Floyd King — "What is a Flageolet?" The dictionary says it is a small musical instrument of the flute class. However it is played like a clarinet, blowing in one end as opposed to across in the case of a flute.

The flageolets played in circus sideshows had a small bell at the end and looked somewhat like a clarinet. Since the dancers in the cooch shows were purported to be of Oriental extraction, it was natural that the musicians providing the background would usually be dressed as Orientals, actually more like the Near East, as Turks or Arabs. The flageolet player on Floyd King's Walter L. Main Circus in 1925 was named Columbia Ben Dab.

After an extensive search of our files we are unable to turn up a photo of a flageolet player in action on a circus; however we did find a couple of photos of flageolet players at carnivals and street fairs around 1907. These photos were taken by the late Marion Organ, Wilmington, Ohio. As was usually

the case, a base drum was also used with the flageolet in their duet classic concerts. — Fred D. Pfening, Jr.



ONE SHEET

By Fred D. Pfening III

The historian is only as good as his data. By the discipline's nature, the scholar's field of study is defined by the sources available to him. One who chooses an esoteric area like the American circus in the 1850's and 1860's is frustrated by the dearth of information. Historians of past generations such as C.G. Sturtevant and George Chindahl were limited by their material — advertising matter, route books, programs, the *New York Clipper*, and a handful of letters, memoirs and diaries — and as a consequence could not analyze the period in depth.

Aware of the shortcomings of traditional sources, historians in recent years have begun to exploit new documents to expand their knowledge of the period. As noted recently in this column a number of CHS members have read the era's local newspapers with impressive results that have greatly enhanced our understanding. The wealth of information John Polacsek drew from Ohio newspapers for his fine master's thesis is perhaps the leading example of this work. The thousands of newspapers of the 1850's and 1860's, deposited in libraries and historical societies across the country, will continue to offer great opportunities to the industrious.

Another major source, one almost totally unexplored, is the handful of daily papers that carried weekly circus sections. At least three Ohio dailies, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the *Cincinnati Inquirer*, and the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, published columns in the late 1850's and early 1860's, and there are indications that newspapers in other major cities regularly reported circus news.

A few years ago I read the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial* at the Ohio Historical Society. For this period it is a far more lucrative source than the *New York Clipper* which often lifted its circus news from the *Commercial*. The paper is doubly valuable because, unlike the *Clipper*, it examined the circus from both an external and internal point of view. On the one hand, it reported the "politics" of the circus (to use Richard Conover's phrase), such as when an exotic animal was imported or when one showman bought out another. In this respect it was trade journalism, except its coverage was both more complete and more intelligent than the *Clipper*. A few examples of the *Commercial's* "political" reporting will establish its value to the researcher interested in internal developments in the circus business.

Its 3 January 1857 edition noted that James June, one of the Flatfoots, was in town and showed the paper's reporter a letter he had received from Avery Smith concerning the purchase of two performing elephants that had been a sensation on the continent. These elephants, procured from Gerald Quick, another partner in the Sands, Nathans & Co. Circus, became the famous Anthony and Cleopatra. Smith said that these elephants were so extraordinary that the feats of the previous year's super-attraction, Albert and Victoria, were "said to be nothing" in comparison to the new pachyderm feature.

Another note, this one from the 21 February 1858 issue, noted that Chauncey Weeks had sold his interest in the Van Amburgh show to a young Indiana showman. The young man was Hyatt Frost, and this transaction marked the beginning of his long career as a circus and menagerie owner.

The *Commercial* did not restrict its circus coverage to solely the movers and shakers of the industry. The activities of smaller shows were also reported. In 1858 the paper was particularly amused by the feud between Yankee Robinson and his partner Burt. It seems they had a policy disagreement early in the season and divided the equipment. After heated opposition battles in mid-season, they joined forces again in October, and the show went into quarters that fall partnership intact.

While the paper does much to flesh out our knowledge of the period, it is of even greater value in analyzing the socio-economic influences on the amusement business. No other source of the period that I know of better articulated the societal forces which determined whether a circus made money or not. The importance of economics, climate, territory and religion were all scrutinized.

Perhaps the most interesting fact garnered from reading the paper for 1857 and 1858 was that both these years were disastrous ones for the industry, as devastating as the early 1890's, or the 1930's. On 4 September 1858, it noted: "Most of the traveling exhibitions are wending towards winter quarters. The season to most of them has been disastrous; with the exception of those companies traveling South, they are anxious to bring it to a close." A month later it reported that many shows "will find it difficult to weather the winter, and raise the material for the next summer's campaign." The main cause of the debacle was the depression of 1857.

There were, of course, other factors. One was bad weather. "The bad weather," wrote the circus critic on 12 June 1858, "has caused most of the establishments out this season to loose nearly half of their appointments." Remember, the management had to feed the animals and pay the actors — rain or shine.

Over-saturation of territory also hurt the industry. "The circuses traveling East are barely paying expenses, that section of the country has for the past few years been overdone," it noted on 6 June 1857. This frontier context, however, had a more optimistic flip side. In 1858 the Van Amburgh Menagerie was the first show to play parts of northern Michigan. "Van Amburgh's 'Animule' show," wrote the paper, "is traveling away down in a portion of Michigan, where, the Manager states 'there never has been a show before.' What a land of promise and bad roads it must be."

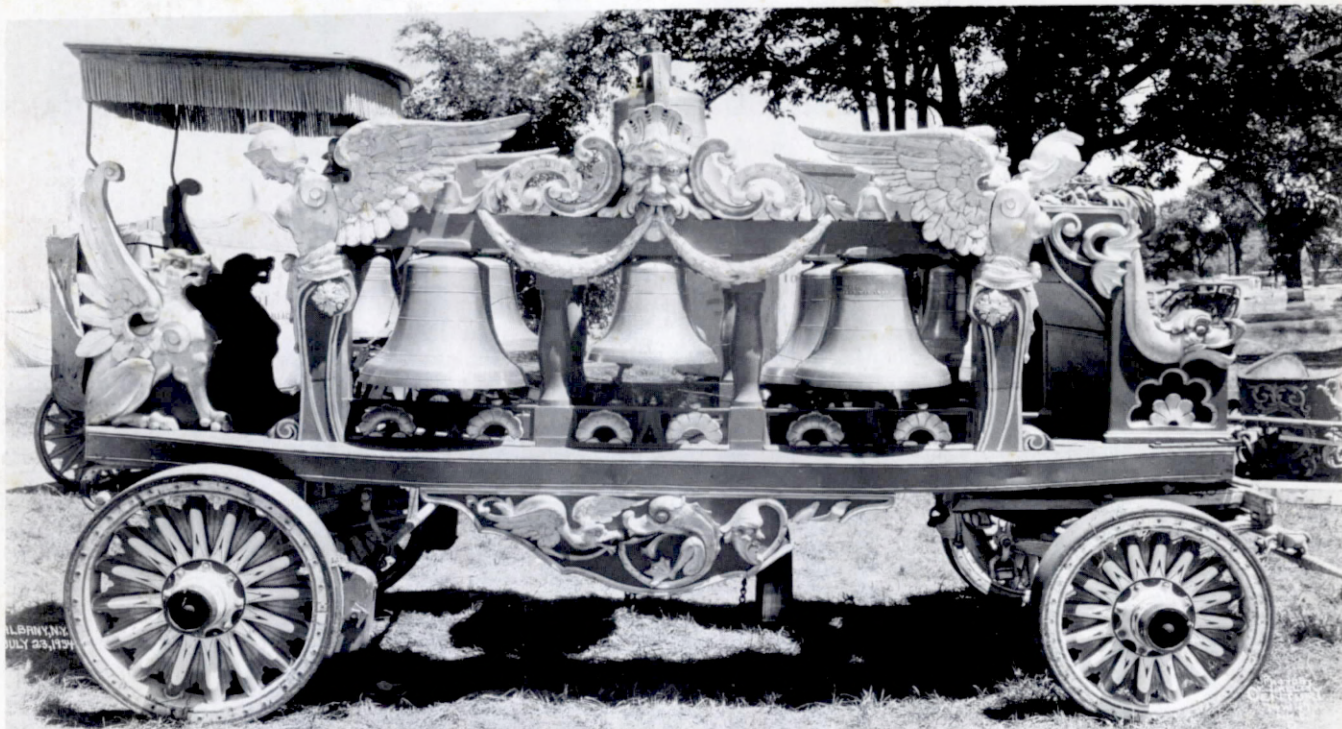
The late 1850's was a period like today in which evangelical religion flourished. The *Commercial* noted the movement's affect on circuses. On 29 May 1857, our unknown commentator wrote: "Several of the American circus companies are wending their way Canadaward, to get out of the influence of the religious revivals now raging in the rural districts, and which they pronounce to be 'death on the show business.'"

The *Cincinnati Daily Commercial* is essential to anyone doing research in the late 1850's and early 1860's. The other Ohio papers should also yield much valuable information, and a look at New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago papers of the era will hopefully turn up dailies that covered circus activities. I envision the day when the *New York Clipper* (called the "Old Reliable" for more reasons than one) will become an incidental source of 19th century circus history. The exploitation of the *Commercial* and other papers of its genre is a start.

1977 CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION DATES SET

The 1977 CHS convention will be held in Sarasota, Florida, February 3 through 5. Events will be held at the Ringling Museum of the Circus and the Circus Hall of Fame.

A list of motels will be published in the Christmas issue of the *BANDWAGON*. Set the dates aside so you can be with us.



The Bell Wagon on Hagenbeck-Wallace
Circus in 1934.

FROM CIRCUS HOBBY HALL

COLLECTORS ITEMS

Out of print circus books. Latest circus books. Route books and route cards.

NOVELTIES

Snow Globe (Circus Towne). Circus motif key chains and pendant. Her Highness Maggie Udder (colored picture).

BACK ISSUES

White Tops. Bandwagons. Little Circus Wagons. Southern Sawdust.

FOR MODEL BUILDING

One Fourth Scale

Two Hemisphere Bandwagon. Circus Figures & Bandsmen. Mini HO scale Two Hemisphere Bandwagon Kit.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Black & White. All 8" x 10"

Ringling Venice Winterquarters. Betty Hutton (G.S.O.E.). Clown & Wagon pictures. Gargantua.

CIRCUS RECORDS

Circus Bands and Callopes.

Now mailing our Three Ring Letter (Nov.) listing our entire stock. Your name and address are all we need.

FREDDIE DAW (b.)
249 CATALONIA AVENUE
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA 33134

FOR SALE

Circus Belt Buckle:

Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey
1923 Tiger Litho in Color — \$6.00

Freak Poster:

1933 Ringling Golden Jubilee
Kelty Photo of Famous Sideshow People 12"x24"
Great Collector's Item

Wanted To Buy:

CIRCUS LITHOS, PROGRAMS,
LETTERHEADS, etc.

Circus Circus
625 Post Street
San Francisco, Ca. 94109